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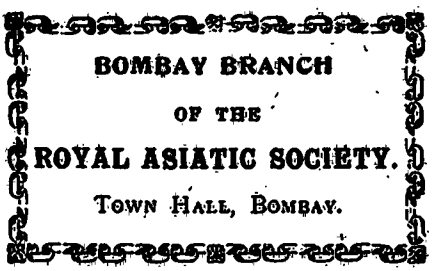

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"ECCE HOMO"

Reprinted from "Good Words."

"ECCE HOMO"

BY THE RIGHT HON.
W. E. GLADSTONE

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"ECCE HOMO."*

PART I.

"NO anonymous book, since the "Vestiges of Creation," (now more than twenty years old)—indeed, it might almost be said no theological book, whether anonymous or of certified authorship—that has appeared within the same interval, has attracted anything like the amount of notice and of criticism which

* "Ecce Homo: a Survey of the Life and Work of Jesus Christ." 8vo. Macmillan & Co. 1866.

have been bestowed upon the remarkable volume entitled "Ecce Homo."

Probably we should have to travel much further back in order to find a work which, having drawn forth commendation so warm, and censure so sharp, had both acquired the one and incurred the other from the most directly opposite quarters. The fact, however, is undisputed, and the instances familiar enough: and the phenomenon admits, perhaps, of some explanation, though it may perhaps be a partial explanation only. On the one hand, it is plain that the author repeatedly uses language which could not consistently be employed in treating of Christianity from what is termed the orthodox point of view; and the offence which many have

taken on this account has, in such cases unhappily, put a dead stop to any real investigation of the work in its general bearings. Or, if the process has been continued, yet a determined adhesion to fixed and unelastic modes of thought has made it so repulsive, as to ensure its ending in thorough-paced condemnation. On the other hand, what is loosely called society, and is represented by the literature, if not of the age, yet of the moment, has been making of late much of what may be termed proud flesh ; a sign of ungoverned effort, and of life indeed, but of somewhat crude and disordered life. Into this tissue of proud flesh the work cuts, perhaps more deeply than any other production of recent years; not by direct insertion of the

knife, but by bringing home to the reader's mind, with a wonderful force and freshness, this impression, that there is something or other called the Gospel, which, "whatever it may be," as was said by an old Pagan poet of the Deity, has very strong, and what may even turn out to be very formidable, claims, not merely on the intellectual condescension, but on the loyal allegiance and humble obedience of mankind. To drive home this impression to the heart and mind of the nineteenth century, now already grown elderly and growing old, disturbs the self-complacency of a mind determined upon comfort, and naturally enough constitutes a grave offence in the views of those to whom the chequered but yet imposing fabric of actual Christianity, still casting

its majestic light and shadow over the whole civilised world, is a rank eyesore, and an intolerable grievance.

This offence, serious in itself, is attended with aggravating circumstances. There is a tone of familiarity, to say the least, at the outset of the volume, and particularly in the Preface, which naturally tends to raise hopes that the history of Him to whom so many lands, and so many ages, have bowed the knee, is about to receive a very free handling. And, indeed, the author, it is observed, actually by implication calls himself a critic. He apparently proposes "to accept those conclusions about Christ, not which church doctors or even apostles have sealed with their authority, but which the facts themselves, *critically*

weighed, appear to warrant." And yet this "critic," forsooth, we by and by discover, does not conform to the first law of theological criticism, which seems to be with many not far from this: that every question of history or creed, hitherto held affirmatively, and now admitted to examination, is to be determined in the negative. Or, more pointedly, he does not conform to the canon which Dr Strauss lays down as a postulate, if not an axiom, in his "Life of Christ composed for the German People,"* where we have the following proposition: "A personality, which on one side indeed is of a man, but on the other is a being of higher order, a God or

* "Das Leben Jesu für das Deutsche Volk bearbeitet." Von D. F. Strauss. 2 Auflage, Leipzig, 1864. P. 1.

Son of God, and which, though born of a human mother, is begotten of no human father, such an object we hand over to fable and to poetry, but never think of making it the theme of a serious historical treatment." This staggering proposition our author does not adopt: nay, he believes in miracles, or at least has registered no vow to disbelieve them. Now this seems like taking the shibboleth of a party, and then turning out no better than a traitor in the camp. In fine, to the absolutely stereotyped forms both of faith and scepticism, to the "high and dry" believer, and to the "high and dry" non-believer, the author of "Ecce Homo" has been a most unacceptable visitant, for apparently he has caused to both a good deal of vague perturbation.

This, however, as has been said, is but a partial explanation, especially as regards the objector on the side of orthodoxy. To him in particular this volume, quite apart from those occasional offences (as we will call them) of language that have already been mentioned, delivers a most serious challenge. Undoubtedly it exhibits the character of our Lord on the human side. It purports to show, and it actually shows Him as man: and it leaves us to see, through the fair curtain of His manhood, what we may. The objection taken to this mode of treatment, in substance, perhaps amounts to this: that our Saviour is not a mere man, but is God made man; and that He ought not to be exhibited in any Christian work as a man only, but

as God and man. And justice compels us to add, that those who challenge the author of "Ecce Homo" on this ground are not always persons whose judgment can be summarily put aside on the score of bigotry and blindness.

Now, as to the matter of fact, the simple question, namely, whether this writer exhibits our Saviour as man only, let the objector, at any rate for argument's sake, have his way. It is plain that, to say the least, the human aspect so predominates in this volume, as to be at first sight almost the only one. But on the rights of the case, as distinguished from the bare matter of fact, there is much to be said. It is very difficult, it is, humanly speaking, almost impossible, to maintain a just

balance, together with a close union between two ideas of such immense disparity as God and man: the wailing infant, and the supreme Creator: the Victim of Death, and the Lord of Death: the despised of all, and the Judge of all. Heresy from an early date cut the heart of this difficulty by denying the divinity of Christ. The Christian Church, with its force undivided, and its attention concentrated on subjects of controversy, which then were as conspicuously few as they were profoundly vital, did indeed make good for itself a clear and solid theological standing-ground, in strict correspondence with the idea of an Emmanuel, or God with us. But the student of ecclesiastical history, or even the mere cursory inspector of the records of a

few of the councils of the fourth century, knows that it was not until after many a fearful, and even what, to human eyes, might seem many a giddy reel, that a nearly unanimous Christendom settled down upon a centre of gravity in doctrinal expression, which has been perfectly stable through all the vicissitudes of fifteen hundred years, and which to all appearance nothing can now shake, except there come a shock under which all definite Christianity shall crumble. This combined belief in the divinity and humanity of Christ has survived the impact and strain of all the convulsive forces which rent East from West, or as the Eastern Christians would, with more show of reason, say, West from East; which then broke off from the great

Western mass so many integral parts of its closely articulated structure; and which have profoundly disorganised so much even of what they did not actually sever. Yet it is very difficult for the subjective Christianity of individuals, or even for systems, to maintain with precision the equilibrium which has been so laboriously won for its members by the action of the early Church. In the Roman communion it has long seemed to observers from without, as if much of what belonged to the humanity of Christ in the first forms of Christian belief, and according to the common creeds, were virtually intercepted by devotion addressed in the first instance to intermediate objects, and too often apt to rest there. In England, and, as some think, still

more in Scotland, there is on the other hand a tendency among imperfectly informed Christians practically to merge the humanity in the divinity of our Lord, to underrate or overlook its continued existence and action, in some cases even to suppose that it terminated with the theophany, or manifestation of the Divine Person in the flesh.

If this be so, then, perhaps, on the part of a book like "Ecce Homo," it may be right to retort a friendly expostulation, and to entreat objectors to consider with themselves whether their impatience of a detailed picture of our Lord in His humanity is really so unequivocal a sign of orthodoxy as they suppose; or whether, on the contrary, it may rather be a token that the religious mind

among us has, from want of habitual cultivation, grown dry and irreceptive on that side of the Christian creed, so that the kind of writing which they encounter with rebuke and suspicion is, possibly, the very kind which is needed to bring us back to the full vigour of that mixed conception of the character and person of our Lord, which in reality forms, according to the acknowledgment of nearly all communions carrying the Christian name, the central idea of the Christian system.

It may, however, be further said, and it may even be true, that the author of "Ecce Homo" does not throughout handle the subject of our Saviour's humanity with the care and caution of language which would be observed, and ought to be observed, by a sound

believer, not to say by a trained theologian. And this form of the indictment brings us at length near, by the reply which it suggests, to that which, speaking without any special information, and merely using the materials of judgment which the work supplies, we should take to be the true position of the writer, and the legitimate office of the work.

In his brief preface the author of "Ecce Homo" has informed us that he wrote it for the satisfaction of his own mind. The work then was the work of one who felt his way, and made his road as he went along; it was a tentative work, and a tentative work can ill afford to be judged by the rules applicable to one which is didactic. The didactic writer is in possession when he begins of all the know-

ledge with which he ends; the tentative writer gathers as he goes. The first is bound by the same rules all along; the other enlarges the scope of his vision at each step he makes, and may naturally and justifiably have employed language and assumed a tone when he commenced his labours which would be unbecoming from the more advanced position that he occupies at the close. Nor ought he of necessity to go back upon and recast his diction, so as to give himself one colour and one attitude from first to last; for if he did so he would be likely to efface from his composition those lineaments of truth and nature on which its effect as a whole might in great measure depend. For in such a work, which is essentially a work of self-education, that which,

above all things, the reader ought to see is the progression of effect, which the study of the subject, exhibited in the composition of the book, has had upon the mind of the writer. He should be placed in a position to measure with some accuracy the distance between his author's point of departure and point of arrival; and, in order that he may do this, he must know the actual whereabout of the one as well as of the other. Now the very language by which the author of "Ecce Homo" has, it may be, pained or startled the minds of numerous readers, may perhaps be no more than a true index of the unformed but upright state of mind in which he addressed himself to a subject, never, it would seem, effectually brought home to his under-

standing through those channels of tradition and authority which with most of us have been the earliest, and with some, it may be feared, the only, avenues of access for the Christian religion to our intellects as well as to our hearts.

I ought perhaps to ask pardon from this most able and honourable writer for the freedom of these assumptions, which cannot plead as their warrant any knowledge except such as has been derived from the pages of the work itself. Yet, whether they are in themselves excusable or not, they may, at least, have the effect of accrediting the acknowledgments of obligation, and the professions of admiration by which they will in the main be followed.

The chief objection, then, which is thought

to lie against this work from the side of the ancient Christian belief is, that it exhibits our Lord in His human nature, or on the human side of His person only. And, as has been observed, probably those who urge this objection would follow it up by urging that the "word of truth" is to be "rightly divided," that the several parts of religion ought to be exhibited in their due proportions, that the severance of its limbs is fatal to its vitality, that the licence to teach half-truths is all that Falsehood can desire, and that, in point of fact, all the havoc made by Error has been effected by the use of this very method.

Now the answer to this reasoning, so far as it is of a general character, appears to be

obvious enough. The teaching of half-truths is, indeed, indefensible and mischievous, when they are taught as whole truths. But there is an order and succession in the process of instruction: and that which is not good as a resting-place may be excellent and most necessary as a stage in an onward journey. It was not at the commencement of His career, but it was on the very evening of His passion that our Lord Himself was pleased to say to His disciples, "I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now."* Indeed, the negation of this principle would throw every established method of acquiring knowledge into confusion, and, if enforced and persevered in, would condemn the

* John xvi. 12.

human understanding to a hopeless and imbecile sterility. For the doctrine that all the parts of a subject must be presented at once can only be reduced to practice by excluding from view all that is really elevated and advanced, by dwelling perpetually in the circle of the merest rudiments, and by presenting even these rudiments in forms which are at once extravagant and stunted.

Let us allow, then, that the author of "Ecce Homo" approaches the character of our Saviour on its human side exclusively. This may sound as nearly an equivalent to exhibiting our Lord only in His human nature. The difference between the two will presently, perhaps, become more visible. For the present it may be enough to deal with the

objection only in the first-named of these two forms. When so stated, the assertion it involves may be true. But the grave question remains, Is it really a just objection? Can no work which confines itself to approaching the character of our Saviour on its human side, have its just and proper office in the Christian teaching of this or of any period of Christian experience? Or would it be too bold to assert, in direct opposition to such an opinion, that, while such a mode of treatment is open to no insurmountable preliminary objection, it is one eminently suited to the religious exigencies of the present times? Further still. If it be well accommodated to the needs of the time in which we live, does it purchase that accommodation

by the sacrifice of anything which more permanent needs would require? Does it involve a departure from the spirit of the original and great *Evangelium* of the Gospels themselves? Nay, does it involve a departure from their very form?

In order to answer these questions aright, we must humbly endeavour to consider what was, in fact, according to the Gospels, the mode and process of manifestation chosen in order to open up the bosom of that which St Paul so freely describes as "the mystery" of God, and to introduce to the world that Messiah for whom not only the pious and the worldly among the Hebrews, each according to his own conception, were in active longing, but whom, as we know from heathen

sources,* "an ancient and constant opinion rife throughout the East" taught even the common run of men to expect.

For this was no light question. No question of a meteor flitting or flaring across the sky, mounting in glare, and then descending into gloom. No question of an appeal to the rough-and-ready strength of passions and of prejudices, which, evoked and organised with skill, might have changed the surface, but the surface only, of society. The astounding fact of the manifestation of the Lord of Glory in the veil of human flesh may, and does, stagger in some minds the whole faculty of belief. Those minds, however, guided by equity, will admit that if this great Christian

* Suetonius, "Life of Vespasian," c. 4.

postulate be sound, much must follow from it. For then we must in reason expect to find, not only an elaborate preparation in the outer world for an event which, by the very statement of the terms, dwarfs the dimensions of every other known transaction, but likewise a most careful adjustment of the means by which, being so vast in itself, it could find entrance into the human mind and heart. The religion of Christ had to adapt itself to the least as well as to the largest forms of our life and nature, while its central idea was in very truth of such a largeness, in comparison to all we are or can be, as to make the absolute distance between the greatest of human greatness, and the smallest of human littleness, sink into insignificance. No more

in the inner than in the outer sphere did Christ come among us as a conqueror, making His appeal to force. We were neither to be consumed by the heat of the Divine presence, nor were we to be dazzled by its brightness. God was not in the storm, nor in the fire, nor in the flood, but He was in the still small voice. This vast treasure was not only to be conveyed to us, and to be set down as it were at our doors; it was to enter into us, to become part of us, and that part which should rule the rest; it was to assimilate alike with the mind and heart of every class and description of men. While, as a moral system, it aimed at an entire dominion in the heart, this dominion was to be founded upon an essential conformity to

the whole of our original and true essence. It therefore recognised the freedom of man, and respected his understanding, even while it absolutely required him both to learn and to unlearn so largely; the whole of the new lessons were founded upon principles that were based in the deepest and best regions of his nature, and that had the sanction of his highest faculties in their moments of calm, and in circumstances of impartiality. The work was one of restoration, of return, and of enlargement, not of innovation. A space was to be bridged over, and it was vast: but where all the piers, and every foundation-stone of the connecting structure, were to be laid in the reason and common sense, in the history and experience, of man.

This movement, then, was to be a revolutionary movement, but only in the sense of a return from anarchy to order—it was to reconstitute society upon that principle of obedience to the great Father, and of correspondence with His will, which had been almost effaced from the high places and from the outer aspect of the world, and too sorely impaired, even when it lingered here and there in some shadowy retreat. But while, in this sense, revolutionary as to its aim, it was under the strictest restraint as to its means. It was tender, careful, and considerate of all that it found in the world, neither "breaking the bruised reed," nor "quenching the smoking flax," respecting so much of it as had any title to respect, and

enduring with much patience, "for the hardness of their hearts," all such evils as could only have been removed at the cost of introducing greater evils.

These conditions of progress were sufficiently severe. But even these were not all. Provision had to be made not only for establishing aright the relation of Christianity to the world which it was to conquer, but for the subsequent regulation and due balance of the internal forces by which the new community was to live and work. "Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, even Jesus Christ." The basis of the kingdom of God was to lie in Emmanuel, God with us, God made man, God in a human form, assumed and worn for our

sakes. Now, this idea was not a new one. We know that it was not new to the Jew, from the written promises and narratives of the Book of Genesis; from the fourth Figure that moved in the fire with the Three Children; from the strain of prophecy; and from the oral tradition of the Jews. Neither was it new to the Gentile. The old mythology of Greece, casting off the worship of the elements to the right, and animal worship to the left, had for its central figure, in a carnal way, that very idea which the Gospel was to revive in a Christian way—namely, what is called anthropomorphism, or the humanising of its gods, with the counterpart of an equally established deification of its heroes. This close union of the two worlds

and the two natures had supplied the Greek poets with the chief part of their materials, and had been the inspiring principle of Greek art. Now, the fact that both Jew and Gentile were, each in his own way, supplied with a form ready made (so to speak) in the mind, into which the idea of a Divine Deliverer clad in the flesh might drop, while on the one hand it gave a facility, on the other hand certainly constituted a danger, to the infant religion. For the rule itself by which all was to be measured had gone awry; the form or matrix was itself deformed, and in receiving the idea was but too likely to deprave and distort it.

This was so in the case of the Jew, because with him Divine dispensations were

regarded as fundamentally national; and, inasmuch as the foot of the Roman was on his neck, the first and leading characteristic in his idea of the deliverance to be wrought by the Messiah would naturally be, and was, deliverance from the Roman supremacy; restoration to that political liberty which the Jew of our Lord's time—not the exceptional, but the ordinary Jew, not the Simeon or the Nathanael, but the Annas or the Caiaphas—so incurably believed to be his birthright, that he was able, while claiming as his own a history which contradicted him in every page, to boast before our Lord, "we were never in bondage to any man."* There was a danger that,

* John viii. 33.

acting in this sense, and accepting the Gospel thus conceived, the Jews would at once go, as it is well known that the popular fanaticism with one or more false Messiahs did go, into fierce collision with the Roman government. In this way not only would the new religion have been exposed to an unequal contest of physical strength with the one great power of the world, but it would have been placed in an entirely false position from the outset as a kingdom of this world, appealing to force and not to reason for its means of rule. It may then be said, without presumption, that a necessity of the highest kind existed to make provision against that perversion of the great Gospel idea among its Jewish recipients which, to

the vulgar eye, to the eye of the great as well as the little vulgar, would have seemed to be its acceptance, but which would in reality have been its utter depravation and corruption.

For reasons entirely different, a process not less ruinous had to be guarded against in the case of the Gentile. The theanthropic idea, the idea of God made man without ceasing to be God, was, as I have said, familiar and, indeed, fundamental to the old mythology. But the old mythology, which was sadly corrupt and sadly corrupting even while it continued to be a religion, had in the days of our Saviour ceased to be a religion at all. This proposition must be received with some, but not great restraint.

Not only under the gross outer husk of an idolatry covering a land is it conceivable that there may be in the individual mind kernels of residuary belief and of humble obedience, but also, when even an idolatrous system has ceased to be real for a community at large, yet with respect to smouldering sparks of a true religious fire, if we are unable to affirm that they will still exist, neither must we venture to deny that they may. But, as regarded the mind and thought of man at the period of the advent of Christ, it is probably little beyond the most literal truth to say that the old mythology had, in the time of Tiberius Cæsar, ceased to exist as a religious power. The Roman letters and philosophy of that date appear to leave no room

for doubt on the subject. But if this were so, and when along with this there still abode in the world the speculative idea of manifestations of God in human form, associated at every point, as in the later shapes of the mythology it was associated, with everything most foul and loathsome, how terrible would have been the consequences, if the tidings of this new and greater Epiphany of a Divine Person had gone forth, so to speak, prematurely, that is to say, if our Lord had found His way, as under the all-admitting system of Roman policy He would have found His way, into the catalogue of accepted divinities, before the deep and strong and even stern lines had been effectually drawn, which were to fix an impassable

gulf between Christianity and the virulent corruptions that were now in the very heart's core of the popular system, and that it came to subdue and to extirpate. It may indeed be said with truth that the Crucifixion would have been a stumbling-block in the way of such reception as has been here supposed. This is probably true. That scratched caricature which was drawn upon the wall of a vault or chamber of the Palatine Hill in Rome, and by which some Pagan soldier probably mocked the faith of a Christian comrade, illustrates, more aptly than could any commentary, the declaration of the Apostle that Christ *crucified* was to the Greeks (and the Greeks at this period in every question of mind led, and

therefore represent, the Romans) foolishness. But the falsified idea of an incarnate God, to which reference has been made, might, with the full and glorious list of the signs and wonders that He did, long before the end even of our Lord's brief course, have gone forth into the world, and, by its seeming coincidence with the old and first thought of the Hellenic mythology, have worked an inextricable confusion, an irreparable mischief.

Thus, then, the period of our Lord's coming, though it was in many points a period of advanced civilisation, was one at which the world was dark, very dark, in regard to what constitutes either the abstract truth or the practical form of a religion. The pupil

of the general eye was contracted; and it had to be trained by time and care to admit the light: most of all, to be trained so to admit it, that the light, after being admitted, should not then become darkness, for "great would have been that darkness."

These ideas, however, as I have stated them, are anticipations only, or showings forth of what—with a view to the utmost purity and durability—Christianity behoved to be. Such anticipations are of little moment in comparison with the facts, or unless supported by them. In speaking of the facts, I mean simply the facts as represented in the Gospels. Possibly the language used by the author of "Ecce Homo," in his Preface, may have created, and also may even have

warranted, an expectation that he was about to undertake an examination of the external evidence, and of the critical evidence generally, for their authenticity and genuineness. It implies no disparagement of that sphere of labour, or of those who have worked, or who work in it, to assert that there is another sphere or office quite distinct from it, and perfectly legitimate. It is to weigh, not the credentials of the messenger, but the nature of the message; to leave for a moment to others the seal and superscription, and to take a glance at the contents; to inquire what may be the moral and practical evidences of truth which they bear upon their front. And I cannot but presume to think that this is a business exceedingly im-

portant even in its critical aspect. For the intrinsic nature of the documents, and of the lessons to be derived from them, may in itself supply the most powerful testimony with regard to their authorship and authority, or may, on the other hand, leave or disclose a gap in that testimony difficult or even impossible to be filled.

It is well, however, to remove out of the way a preliminary barrier in the way of a right approach to the question how the character of our Saviour is exhibited to us in the Gospels. In this country, amidst an infinitude of real blessings and solid privileges, we have also a fair, and perhaps rather a full, proportion of palpable counterfeits, and of assumptions that will not bear the application

of a moment's thought. For example, because, through the mercy of Providence, we have a perfectly free access to Holy Scripture, we comfortably assume that we are in fact well acquainted with the sacred pages. And with this we join another assumption, scarcely less comfortable,—namely, that, being thus familiar with the Bible, we have had and have no concern with tradition, which, for us, is supposed to have no existence. But we little know the breadth of meaning that lies in the word, or the relation in which we each and all stand to it. The truth is, that we are all of us *traditioners* in a degree much greater than we think. Few, indeed, are there among us whose religious belief and system has actually been formed either from Scripture as a whole,

or even from that limited and singularly precious portion of it with which alone we are at this moment concerned. What we suppose to be from Scripture is really, as a general rule, from the catechism, or the schoolmaster, or the preacher, or the school of thought in immediate contact with which we have been brought up; or, perhaps, it has come from the pastor or from the parent, and in some happy cases by the living and affectionate contact of mind with mind. But even then it has been tradition; that is to say, the delivery by them to us of truth in a form in which they possessed it, and in a form which they deemed the best for us. Now suppose they were right in the choice of that form, still it does not follow that what is now the best

for us, after Christianity has been rooted in the world for nearly two thousand years, was also the best shape and the best order of instruction for those to whom it was a novelty, and who were to be its first propagators, as well as its first receivers.

Even within the compass of the New Testament we see the Christian system presented in various stages of development by its various books, to those for whom they were originally intended. One of these, the earliest, is exhibited to us by the three first, or, as they are now commonly and conveniently termed, the Synoptical Gospels. Another by the Acts of the Apostles—a book in which we find our religion advanced to the stage of corporate or collective action. We find here the first

form of that great society, the Church, which, under the name of the Kingdom of Heaven, our Lord had Himself, not established, but predicted. The two remaining stages are represented by the Gospel of St John and the apostolical Epistles respectively. As between these it is not now necessary to consider the question of priority. The one may be regarded as crowning the Synoptical Gospels, and the other the Acts of the Apostles. For the apostolical Epistles, together with the Apocalypse, both exhibit in detail the nature and workings of the Christian society, and supply the most comprehensive model of that practical instruction which was given by the earliest and greatest fathers of the Church.

The Gospel of St John, on the other hand,

supplies a fourth biography of our Lord. It was certainly given to the Church, according to the general judgment of Christendom, after the three other Gospels; and it also presents the teaching of our Saviour under a new aspect, much more doctrinal, and also more abstract, than that which it bears in the works of the Synoptical writers, to whose compositions it adds little in matters of fact, unless when special teaching was connected with them, or when, as in the two closing chapters, the Evangelist had to record circumstances immediately connected with the foundation of the Church. In this simple description, I seek to avoid wholly the controverted questions whether this was a supplementary Gospel, intended by its author to

fill up what his predecessors had left unsupplied of the history of our Lord's life; or whether it was a polemical Gospel, written for the confutation of heresies then already budding in the Church; or whether its aim was one purely didactic, but with views more comprehensive and profound than those of the preceding Evangelists; or in what proportions and modes either or all of these purposes may have been combined in its composition.

It is quite enough for the present purpose to refer to a matter of fact which cannot be confuted, though it may be, and has been, exaggerated, namely this—that there is a difference between the general strain of the Synoptical Evangelists (so far as it is common

to the three) and of the fourth, and that this difference consists in a greater development, in deeper soundings, in a higher elevation.

M. Renan, in his work on the Life of Christ, which he himself ingenuously declares to be the production of one who is not, though he has been, in the ordinary sense, a believer,* and which some persons have, as I think most unaptly, compared with the 'Ecce Homo," treats this difference as destructive of the truthfulness either of the earlier or of the later picture. To my mind, though there is no real difficulty in either, the notable reciprocal correspondence of the first three Evangelists would seem quite as apt to suggest suspicion as the marked distinctions

* "Vie de Jésus," Introduction, p. lviii.

of the fourth. Of the fact there can be no question. It has, if I mistake not, been pointedly noticed by Coleridge; on whose refined and penetrating mind the Gospel of St John exercised a most happy influence in bringing him to the belief of the accepted Christian doctrine. But why should it be incredible, or even strange, that of any teaching whatever, much more then of such marvellous teaching as our Lord's, some elements should pass more easily into some minds, and others into other minds of a different complexion or affinity? The disciple whom Jesus loved has given us the fullest and deepest picture of His love, and together with His love, of His Person. But it has been justly remarked by Dean Alford that there are scattered over the

pages of the Synoptics a certain number of passages, which are in precise correspondence with the general strain of St John. And it cannot be too carefully borne in mind, that while St John discloses to us a more inward aspect of the doctrine of our Lord, and supplies many propositions that we could not directly gather from his predecessors, the moral and practical bearings of the Four Evangelists are in close and thorough correspondence. They have the very same ethical basis, and they go to produce the very same frame of mind and course of action; and by this very fact, the case of the Gospels is for ever separated from any true analogy with the rival representations of Socrates in the works of Plato and of Xenophon respec-

tively, where the ethical bearings of the two systems appear to be widely different, if not altogether irreconcilable. But I have, perhaps, pursued too long this interesting subject, of which a fuller development would on this occasion be out of place.

It is enough for us to perceive that the communication of our Lord's life, discourses, and actions to believers, by means of the four Gospels was so arranged, in the order of God's providence, that they should be first supplied with biographies of Him which have for their staple His miracles and His ethical teaching, while the mere doctrinal and abstract portion of His instructions was a later addition to the patrimony of the Christian Church. So far as it goes, such a fact may serve to raise pre-

sumptions in favour of the author of "Ecce Homo," inasmuch as he is principally charged with this, that he has not put into his foreground the full splendour and majesty of the Redeemer about whom he writes. If this be true of him, it is true also thus far of the Gospels.

But now let us carry the investigation further. Let us pass from the biographies to the life—from the picture to the Person; and let us inquire whether in any and in what degree it is true that the method pursued also by Him, and if so then the method which an absolute and perfect wisdom prompted, was a method of graduation, a method in which the great Christian ideas were presented not simultaneously, nor in a mass, but with a certain suc-

cession, and a studied order. If so, and if we can find what it was, and if we can also, in some slight degree, perceive the advantages it received and the dangers it avoided, we shall derive from our humble labour new cause for thankfulness and new grounds for contemplating with reverence and adoration the providential action of the Most High.

Thus far, then, I have endeavoured to show that the method and order of religious teaching may vary, as between the period of first introduction, on the one hand, and of established possession and hereditary transmission on the other; that there were reasons in the state of the world at the period of the Advent for a careful and delicate regulation of the approaches for the new religion to

the mind of man; and that in the matter and succession of the Gospels we may find a succinct testimony to this system of providential adjustment.

It will remain principally to examine how far the manner, in which the author of "Ecce Homo" exhibits the picture of our Lord, finds analogies and support in His own method of teaching; and how far the recurrence to such a method in such a work is well or ill adapted to the needs of the time in which we live.

PART II.

WE have now to inquire, what was the order or economy observed by the Saviour in making known to the world the religion He had come on earth to found.

That religion is, indeed, summed up in His own Person. M. Renan has told us a truth we should hardly have expected to hear from him. "He did not preach His opinions: He preached Himself." * In yet fewer words—

* "Vie de Jésus," p. 76.

Christianity is Christ. St John did not teach rhetorically, when he delivered the two-edged saying: "Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is of God: and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is not of God."* But true as this is of the faith full formed and born into the world, it is not in just the same manner true of the embryo. We must go back from the language to the alphabet of religion; and must observe in what shape and order the Master conveyed the first elements of divine knowledge to the stammering lips of a blind and bewildered race. And many, perhaps, among those to whom the subject may be new, will be struck with the reserve and limita-

* 1 John iv. 2, 3.

tion that attends the teaching of our Lord, as reported by the Synoptical Evangelists, in regard to the central and fundamental doctrine concerning His own Person.

Let us proceed to examine the question briefly under each of the following heads:—

1. The personal history of our Lord as given in the first three Gospels.

2. The discourses of the first three Gospels: and certain summaries given in them of our Lord's teaching.

3. The injunctions often delivered to those who had been the subjects or witnesses of miraculous cure or relief.

4. The method of teaching by parable.

5. The commissions or charges given to the

twelve Apostles, and to the seventy disciples.

6. The distribution of doctrinal teaching in the Gospel of St John.

Those portions of the narrative in the Synoptical Gospels, which principally bear upon the Divinity of our Lord, refer to matter which formed, it will be found, no part of His public ministry. Such are the account of His birth and infancy in the first two chapters of St Matthew, and the first two chapters of St Luke: the Baptism, as it is recorded in the third chapter of St Matthew, the first of St Mark, and the third of St Luke; the Temptation, in the fourth of St Matthew, and the fourth of St Luke: and the Transfiguration, in the seventeenth of St Matthew, and the ninth

of St Mark and St Luke respectively. Now of these great occasions, not so much as one appears to have been known even to the whole of the Apostles at the time of its occurrence. The birth and infancy speak for themselves. The baptism seems to have preceded the calling of the very earliest among them.* The temptation was a part of that mysterious training of the Saviour, in which He trod the wine-press alone, and none could share with Him. Lastly, the transfiguration was reserved for the three leading Apostles, St Peter, St James, and St John; and we are told that "Jesus charged them, saying, Tell the vision

* Cf. Mark i. 16. And observe that St Peter (2 Ep. chap. i. vers. 16–18), establishing his own authority as a witness, refers only to the voice at the Transfiguration, and not to the voice at the Baptism.

to no man, until the Son of Man be risen again from the dead."* This injunction is most of all remarkable when we call to mind that it excluded from knowledge of the event the nine remaining Apostles, besides the Mother and the nearest relatives of Christ. And we happen to know that it was obeyed: for says St Luke, "They kept it close, and told no man in those days any of those things which they had seen."† Until after the transfiguration, that is, until a somewhat advanced period of our Saviour's ministry, He does not appear to have predicted or indicated to them in any manner His own impending death. The full and glowing confession of Him by St Peter as the Son of the living God, has all the appear-

* Matt. xvii. 9; Mark ix. 9. † Luke ix. 36.

ance of a great progression newly achieved in that ardent soul; and it was met accordingly by a reward in the famous announcement of Matt. xvi. 17–19. But this remarkable confession was not yet to be given to the world. For the Evangelist proceeds to say, "Then charged He His disciples that they should tell no man that He was Jesus the Christ." *

No doubt the entry into Jerusalem on the day of Palms was a very solemn and very suggestive assumption of the character of Messiahship; but it belongs rather to the Passion than the Life: it is the beginning of the end, the opening act of the closing scene.

If we pass on from the great events of our

* Matt. xvi. 20.

Lord's personal history to His teachings, as recorded in His discourses and sayings by the Synoptic writers, we shall find that they, too, are remarkable for the general absence of direct reference to His Divinity, and, indeed, to the dignity of His Person altogether.

The very first notice of our Saviour's teaching by St Matthew, gives us to understand that He began His ministry by simply echoing the words of the Forerunner, St John Baptist: "Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."* And when He unfolded the true meaning of that wide and deep word, "Repent," in the Sermon on the Mount, He asserted, indeed, His own authority as a teacher, His

* Matt. iv. 17; comp. iii. 2.

title to be heard, whatever the seeming relation of His teaching to the established traditional lore, and to be heard without appeal: but He asserted nothing more. And even this was done by implication only; not dogmatically. While His precepts are sustained by the assumption of authority, and this assumption in its turn is (so to speak) buttressed by His miracles, He makes as yet no separate claim to the reception or recognition of Himself, and He tells no tale about Himself. In a word, for the time, He Himself, as apart from His sayings, is nowhere. In the weighty and even awful comparisons with the house upon the rock, and the house upon the sand, which form the climax of the discourse, the cases which they illustrate are those of the

man who receives, and the man who does not receive, His sayings, not His Person. It is only in the tenth chapter that we find even an allusion to the reception of Himself—"He that receiveth you receiveth me: *and he that receiveth me receiveth Him that sent me.*"* And this is in an address to His disciples, not in a discourse to the people. To them He is for the present more like what His ministers are now. He is a messenger, and His only present concern is about His message, His only present duty to carry and deliver it to those for whom it is intended. He has not yet told the multitude that He is the Son of God: He speaks of "your" Father, and "thy" Father, not, as afterwards, or elsewhere, of "my

* Matt. x. 40.

Father."* He has not yet told them He is the Son of Man, in that pre-eminent sense which was to connect Him with the House of David, and to make Him the Heir of the promises, and the representative of the race. Yet in the midst of this remarkable abstention, He laid by that discourse the foundations of a morality far transcending the rarest and the best among all the rare or good of what had yet been delivered to mankind; and thus He set about constructing, as it were, the strong and stable pedestal, on which thereafter His own glorious image might be securely raised, and exhibited for the worship of the world.

St Mark† gives an account, almost verbally

* With one exception only, near the close (Matt. vii. 21), not found in St Luke. † Mark i. 15.

the same with St Matthew's, of the opening of our Lord's ministry. St Luke seems to pass by what they have recorded, and commences his narrative with the reading, in the synagogue at Nazareth, of the prophecy: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor; He hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord."* On which His only comment was, "This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears." This is a clear and undeniable declaration of His claim to be a Teacher sent from God, and of certain

* Luke iv. 18, 19, 21.

strongly-marked moral results, which were to be, not the consequence only, but also the proof of His mission. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, *because* He hath appointed me" to convey the blessings before enumerated. Yet here we find, not alone that He keeps silence on the subject of His Deity, but that even for His claim to Divine sanction and inspiration He appeals to results. Nor was this principle less remarkably exemplified in the answer which He gave to the disciples of John, when they asked Him, (whether it was in their own name or in his need not now be inquired.) "Art thou He that should come, or do we look for another?" Whereupon He replies, not by an arbitrary *ipse dico*, an unsustained assertion of His own Messiahship: all such,

as we presently find, He rebuked when He said, "If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true."* Neither did He reply by an argument resting only or mainly upon the power which marked His acts, but upon a paramount regard to their beneficent and loving character, upon His care for the lowly, and His constant war against the mass of suffering in the world, to hem it within narrower and yet narrower bounds. "Go and show John again those things which ye do hear and see: The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the Gospel preached to them."† On these premises rests

* John v. 31. † Matt. xi. 4, 5.

the sequel: "And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me."* Truly this was the crown of the Lord's humility, that He was content in this lowly wise to solicit, through the assent of our understanding, the allegiance which He was entitled, as Creator and Master, to command. But in that humility did there not lie the wisdom of the Master Builder, who proceeded precept upon precept, line upon line; who was minded to set, each in their proper place and degree, the stones of the spiritual temple, so that "the whole body" might be "fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part?"†

Thus far what we seem to see is almost a

* Matt. xi. 6. † Eph. iv. 16.

total suppression of the personality of our Lord in His oral teaching, except upon the single point, which was essential to His purpose from the first, that He should not descend into the arena of mere argumentative disputes with adversaries, but should assume authority. This claim is involved in the whole strain even of the Sermon on the Mount, which is couched in the language of command, and of inappellable assumption of His right. It is repeated as often as we find the words, "I say unto you." But it seems, independently even of His words, to have been expressed also in His manner, to have been made legible in the midst of all His meekness. It is not only mentioned by St Matthew* at the close of the Sermon on

* Matt. vii. 28.

the Mount, but it is also recorded by St Mark in a place where that Evangelist gives not even a hint as to the matter of His teaching. "He entered into the synagogue and taught. And they were astonished at His doctrine: for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the Scribes."* Beyond telling them this of Himself, we may thus far say, He told them nothing. He set a picture before their eyes: He left them to be the judges, by the composition, the drawing, and the colour, from whose hand it came.

Yet even of His work, as distinguished from His person, He did not, to all eyes, exhibit the whole. Though the general rule was a free exhibition by our Lord of His miraculous

* Mark i. 21, 22.

powers, yet when in the case of the daughter of the ruler Jairus,* He proceeded to exercise them in a conquest over death, only the three preferred Apostles were allowed to be witnesses, together with the parents of the maiden, to this exercise of His might; the people having been put forth. On the parents He laid the charge, "that they should tell no man what was done." There was but one other occasion, until close upon the end of His career, when He exercised a like power: namely, the case of the widow of Nain.

We have now seen how in one great miracle in which He set Himself against the last enemy, He had cast a veil over the exercise of His power, and had told it only as a man

* Matt. ix. 25; Luke ix. 51, 58.

tells a secret to a few. But this reserve extends much farther. On the Gentile centurion, indeed, whose faith He so greatly commends, and whose servant He healed, He laid no injunction of secrecy. There was no fear that a good soldier of the Roman army would fall into the snare that beset the Hebrew, or would clutch at the idea of a carnal or political Messiahship. Other considerations may have borne upon the case. The preparation of the centurion's mind, it is evident, was greatly advanced; and perhaps we shall be right in thinking that such an one could be trusted, while others could not, to make a judicious and discriminating use of the wonder he had seen. On the evil spirits, who "believed and trembled," we are told that

He laid an injunction that they should not bear witness to Him. Even the proclamation of the truth was not to proceed from the tainted source of a rebellious will and intelligence. "And He healed many that were sick of divers diseases, and cast out many devils: and He suffered not the devils to speak, because they knew Him."* Knowing Him, they knew that He was God as well as man; and not even from His own lips had this truth yet proceeded in His popular teaching throughout the land. On men, too, He had in many cases laid similar commands. For example: in the first miracle recorded by the first Evangelist we find these words: "See thou tell no man: but go thy way, show thyself

* Mark i. 34. In Luke iv. 41, is an equivalent declaration.

to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded for a testimony unto them."*

Of course it is not meant to be asserted that our Lord's miracles were generally secret. For where would then have been that sad responsibility of Capernaum and Chorazin and Bethsaida, which gave them a place before Sodom and Gomorrah on the awful roll of the divine judgment? The rule of the miracles was publicity; but the exceptions to the rule are remarkable, and seem to mark out clearly the bounds within which they were meant to operate. Without doubt, as we know from a multitude of passages of Scripture, not less than from the reason of the case, they were meant to produce in all men the conviction

* Matt. viii. 4.

so well expressed by Nicodemus: "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him."* The purpose of the exhibition of miraculous powers seems to have been to produce this very conviction; and perhaps it was, in the first instance, to produce nothing more. Rapidity of movement was no part of the providential design. Like the seed to which Christ himself compares the Gospel, all the early stages of its life were to be silent and to be slow. Gradually to lay a broad basis of such evidence as ought through all time to satisfy the reason and the heart of mankind, seems to have been the object with which our Saviour wrought. The general, if he

* John iii. 2.

be a good general, and has his choice, will display his whole army on the battle-field before any portion of it begins to fight. The hot and fierce assent of a few enthusiasts might doubtless have been had on easy terms: like a fire of straw, come and gone in a moment, and leaving neither light nor warmth behind. Are any startled at the idea that our Lord's first object may have been in the main limited to fixing well in the minds of His hearers the belief in His divine mission only? Will they say in answer, that by His reply to the confession of Nicodemus He emphatically teaches that ruler the insufficiency of the belief to which that ruler had attained? For the answer of Christ is not a commendation or an acquiescence, but a solemn monition: "Verily, verily,

I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."* As much as to say, "It is not enough that you have examined my credentials, and that, approving them, you own me as a teacher carrying a commission from on high. You must accept deeper results of my mission than any you have yet thought of, and must give your mind and spirit to be translated into the region of a new and better life." Such is, I suppose, an approximation to the sense of our Lord's reply. The confession, then, of Nicodemus was insufficient. But so is the first step of a flight without those that are to carry us onward to the level above; yet the laying well and solidly the first steps without any visible regard to

* John iii. 3.

those that are to follow, may be the way, and the only way, to construct a practicable and durable ascent.

There is, however, a peculiar delicacy, if this phrase may be allowed, in this method of procedure adopted by the Great Teacher. Along with that element of superhuman power, which was to establish a superhuman origin for His mission, there was combined a certain character of love, of pity, of unwearying help, of tender and watchful care, which is to be read in the deeds of our Lord from first to last; the only two exceptions, which may have had excellent reasons of their own, being those of the fig-tree and the swine; exceptions not touching the race of man. Now the gross and carnal temper in man is far more easily caught by

power than by love. To a certain extent, then, the display of power, intended to show that Christ had come from God to carry us back along with Himself to God, tended to counteract that very object, if it should relatively lower in our minds the force of the attraction of love; if, of the two great functions of Deity exhibited in the miracles, the one which was more splendid and imposing should eclipse the one more modest, but more precious and more authentic. Hence, perhaps, it is that we find a certain veiling of the power that was in Christ, by these reserves and injunctions of secrecy. In the rude repetition of the miracles from mouth to mouth, they would have fared as the picture of some great artist fares when it is copied at second, third, and fourth hand: the finer and

deeper graces disappear; the clothing of the idea disappears, and only a coarse outline survives. And so it really seems as if our Saviour had desired to place considerable checks on the circulation of mere report concerning the miracles; and in lieu of its confused and bewildering echoes, to trust rather to each man's seeing for himself, and then calmly reflecting on so much as he had seen.

What we have thus far observed in the discourses and the miracles, we shall further see in what still remains to be surveyed of our Saviour's pastoral career. Let us try next the Parables. It is not necessary here to dwell on the characteristics of this method of teaching; to show how they win a way into the willing soul; how, waiving immediate and striking

effects, they provide the means of illumination for the meditative mind as the sense of the allegory gradually opens on it; how they supply the indolent with an excuse for his indolence, and, as if it were judicially, exasperate the contempt and aversion of the proud. But there is another characteristic of the Parables, which appears to be strictly germane to the purpose of these remarks. In all of the greater ones, which present their subject in detail, He himself, when they are interpreted, fills a much higher place than that simply of a teacher divinely accredited. They all shadow forth a dispensation, which, in all its parts, stands related to, and dependent on, a central figure; and that central figure is, in every case but two, our Saviour Himself. He is the Sower of the

seed, the Owner of the vineyard, the Householder in whose field of wheat the enemy intermixed the tares, the Lord of the unforgiving servant, the Nobleman who went into a far country and gave out the talents and said, "Occupy till I come;" lastly, the Bridegroom among the virgins, wise and foolish. In every one of these, our Saviour appears in the attitude of kingship. He rules, directs, and furnishes all; He punishes and rewards. Every one of these, when the sense is fully apprehended, repeats, as it were, or anticipates the procession of the day of Palms, and asserts His title to dominion. They must be considered, surely, as very nearly akin, if they are not more than nearly akin, to declarations of His Deity. Two others there are which have

not yet been mentioned. One is the parable of the householder, who planted a vineyard and went into a far country, and sent his servants to receive his share of the produce. In this parable our Lord is not the master, but the master's heir, the person whose the vineyard is to be, and who, being sent to perform the office in which the other messengers had failed, is put to death, by the cruel and contumacious tenants.* But this parable, if it sets forth something less than His kingship, also sets forth much more, and embodies the great mystery of His death by wicked hands. There is also the parable of a certain king, which made a marriage for his son:† a relation which involves far more, than had commonly been ex-

* Matt. xxi. † Matt. xxii. 1.

pressed in the direct teaching. Upon the whole, then, the proposition will stand good that these parables differ from, and are in advance of, the general instruction respecting the person of the Redeemer in the three Synoptic Gospels, and place Him in a rank wholly above that of a mere teacher, however true and holy. They set forth that difference from previous prophets and agents of the Almighty, which has been noticed by the Apostle to the Hebrews, where he says that "Moses verily was faithful in all his house as a servant; but Christ as a son, over His own house."* Now, we have to sum up this branch of the inquiry with observing that, in that very chapter of instruction where the proper dignity and weight of

* Heb. iii. 5, 6.

the Redeemer in one of His high offices, namely, as a King, begin to be significantly conveyed, there is a veil interposed, as if to cast the scene into shadow. The truth is there; but it ceases to thrust itself upon the mind, and stands rather as the reward to be obtained in after-thought by a docile attention.

Upon the field, then, which we are now examining, our Lord does not so much teach Himself, as prepare the way for the teaching of Himself, and act once more, though from a different point, and in a new relation, the part of His own forerunner. There is yet another portion of that field, upon which we have to cast a glance. During the brief course of His own ministry, our Saviour gave a commission

to His twelve Apostles, and likewise one to the seventy disciples. Each went forth with a separate set of full and clear instructions. The commission to the Twelve will be found most fully given in the tenth chapter of St Matthew: that to the Seventy in the tenth of St Luke. In conformity with what we have already seen, both are silent in respect to the Person of our Lord. They seem to aim at reproducing in miniature His own ministry. To the Apostles He says, "Preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils."* To the disciples He says, "Heal the sick that are therein, and say unto them, The kingdom of God is come nigh unto

* Matt. x. 7, 8.

you." * The announcement of a society, not founded, but about to be founded upon earth, the obligation of the hearer to believe in what is announced,† the exhibition of works of relief and love, that love taking effect through a preternatural exercise of power,—here is the Gospel as it was ordered to be preached by the followers of our Lord during His lifetime, and before He had begun to open, even to the Twelve, the awful picture of His coming death.‡ Notable, indeed, is the difference, it might almost be said the contrast, between these commissions, and those which were given after the resurrection, as they are related in St Matthew xxviii. 18–20; St Mark xvi. 15–18; St Luke xxiv.

* Luke x. 9. † Matt. x. 33; Luke x. 10–16. ‡ Matt. xvi. 21.

45–49; St John xx. 21–23, and xxi. 15–17. In these latter commissions, the Person of Christ has emerged in all its grandeur, from the shadow to the foreground: it is His power that is given over to them, into Him they are to baptize, in His name they are to preach repentance and remission of sins.

To sum up, then; there was a twilight before the dawn, and a dawn before the morning, and a morning before the day. The contrast between the two classes of commissions, that we have just seen, receives its most vivid illustration on the day of Pentecost, which may perhaps not unfitly be termed the birthday of the Church. This contrast is really a proof, not of dissonances in the Divine counsels, but of an harmonious

and adapted progression in their development, and thus of their essential and steady oneness of design. During our Lord's life, the bulwarks of the kingdom of evil were being smitten again and again by constant exhibitions of His command over the seen and unseen worlds; and its foundations were being sapped by the winning force of His benevolence and love. Even before this work approached its ripeness, He cried, in prophetic anticipation of His triumph, "I beheld Satan like lightning fall from heaven."* When He had died, and risen, and ascended, then the undermining process was complete; and the rushing noise of Pentecost† was like the trumpet-blast

* Luke x. 18. † Acts ii. 2.

about the walls of Jericho, when "the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him; and they took the city."*

It is time, however, to turn to a brief consideration of the question, how far this representation is set aside or modified by the contents of the Gospel of St John. And here I venture on this general proposition: that, transcendent as is the elevation, and inestimable as is the value of the contents, of that Gospel, it is the works of the three Synoptical writers, and not the Gospel of St John, which exhibit to us, so far as a judgment can be formed, the ordinary and average tenor of our Saviour's life, and the true

* Joshua vi. 20.

picture of its daily exhibition to the world. Let this assertion be substantially if rudely tested by a brief glance at the structure of that Gospel. Of the general character, however, of our Lord's teaching contained in it, so much as this may, perhaps, be said by way of preface. It appears as if our Lord commonly was employed in those kinds of word and deed which, repeated in substance over and over again in a large number of places, and before great multitudes of witnesses, were to constitute the main ground of His appeal to the conscience of the world, and the first basis of the general belief in Him; the basis, upon which all the rest was in due time to be built up. But while He thus wrought from day to day and from place

to place, He was also at times employed in sowing a seed which was to lie longer in the ground before the time of germination. Sometimes He set Himself to sow it in capable minds and willing hearts, like those of the Apostles, or like that of Nicodemus; sometimes to let it fall apart from the common beat of the chosen people, and where it could not be choked by their peculiar prejudices, as with the woman of Samaria. But also in Jerusalem itself, at least by one series of discourses, He was pleased to state sufficiently, in the hearing both of the people and of their guides, the dignity and claims of His Person; so that this authentic declaration from His own lips, of the truths which were after the Resurrection to be developed in apostolic

teaching, might accredit that teaching to minds that would otherwise have stumbled at the contrast, or would have been unable to fill the void between such doctrine posthumously preached, and the common tenor of our Lord's words and acts as they are given in the Synoptical Gospels. In this view, such portions of St John's Gospel, as I now refer to, may be regarded as the golden link between the Sermon on the Mount, and the theology of the Apostolic Epistles.

Though the strain of St John's Gospel, and of the teaching of Christ in it, is very even, the occasions and audiences are very different. The last ten chapters, or nearly one-half of the whole, consist entirely of the narrative of the Passion and its sequel, together with

discourses and acts wholly of the inner circle, addressed, that is to say, not to the world, or to the adversaries of Christ, but to those whom He had specially elected to be His friends and followers. In the first two chapters nothing in the way of narrative is contained to distinguish His lessons here from those of the earlier Gospels. The third is composed of discourses to selected persons; namely, to Nicodemus, and to certain disciples of the Baptist. When, in the fourth, our Lord spoke to the woman of Samaria, and afterwards to the people of the city, the effect produced was remarkably powerful and distinct. It was not only (as in the Synoptical Gospels) that they were astonished, or that His fame went abroad,

or that "they glorified God which had given such power unto men,"* or even that in general terms they believed on Him; they went further, and said, as St Peter had said, "We know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world."† But the subject matter of this our Lord's only visit to the outcasts of Samaria, with whom the Jews would not hold intercourse, could have no effect on the general impressions concerning Him in the places of His ordinary travel and resort through Judea or Galilee.

The exceptional teaching, as I would venture to call it, of our Lord among the Jewish people, which would materially tend to modify (by deepening and enlarging them) such im-

* Matt. ix. 8. † John iv. 42.

pressions as men would naturally take from the acts and discourses of the Synoptic Gospels, is really contained in the six chapters from the fifth to the tenth. When we examine these six chapters, we seem to find in them a kind of progression, as if with a view to some special purpose. In the fifth, after the miracle He had performed on the cripple of Bethesda, He conveyed Himself away, "a multitude being in that place."* But He declared to the Jews, no great number of them we must suppose, within the temple, His Sonship, His being invested with the authority of judge over the world, and His claim to the promises and predictions of the Old Testament. In the sixth, He delivered the wonderful dis-

* John v. 13.

course of the "bread of God" at Capernaum, to such of the people forming the five thousand of the day before as remained, and as were able to follow Him by ship across the lake.* But a ray of light is let fall upon the general circumspection and measure in the lessons of our Lord, when we learn that a great reaction followed this discourse, not only among the multitude, but among the disciples of our Lord. "From that time many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with Him."† Here is one sad and sufficient reason for the careful graduation of His course of teaching. He then, after a visit to Galilee, goes up to Jerusalem for the feast of tabernacles,‡ and resumes His discourses or con-

* John vi. 15, 22-25. † John vi. 66. ‡ John vii. 10.

versations in the temple, to much the same general effect as in the fifth chapter. He proclaims Himself the light of the world, He dwells on His special relation to the Father, and He points to the lifting up of the Son of Man. After which, says St John,* many believed on Him; but after a little more discourse, when He had told them "before Abraham was, I am," they took up stones to cast at Him.† Then come the ninth and tenth chapters, in which, having given sight to a man blind from his birth, He finds Himself again in conflict with the spirit of unbelief among the Jews. He now delivers the discourse of the tenth chapter, in which He is the Good Shepherd, and mankind are His

* John viii. 30. † John viii. 59.

sheep; and He gives them eternal life; and this is by His Father's ordinance; and finally reaching the climax of the doctrine, He and His Father are one.* But mark the end, "Then the Jews took up stones again to stone Him." "Therefore they sought again to take Him; but He escaped out of their hand, and went away again beyond Jordan." †

All this portion of our Lord's instruction, then, is profoundly charged with doctrine concerning His Person. It is full and large in instruction for all times and all persons. But it seems to have been delivered to no great number; perhaps, too, within a limited space of time. It stands in marked distinctness from the general tenor of His teaching; and it

* John x. 14, 16, 28–30. † John x. 31, 39, 40.

stands also in contrast with that teaching as to the mode of its reception. It shows that, for the reception of such instruction, the field was not as yet white to the harvest. The scandal and offence were doubtless incurred for the wisest purposes, but they seem to have been the general result; while in the case of the lessons conveyed in the other Gospels, we find no such consequence; but we see there a disposition to hear, and to give praise to God, which was a preparation, at the least, for full, intelligent, and durable belief. Nor does it seem rash or unreasonable to suppose that while, with a view to completing the solid chain of testimony, it behoved our Lord, during His career, thus to bear an explicit testimony to His own personal dignity and claims, and this before

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persons who were not already His partisans; it also behoved that, because of the weakness of the flesh, and the dulness of the eye, and the slackness of the will of man, the performance of that duty should be confined within narrow limits, and that all beyond these limits should be reserved for a happier season.

I have not yet noticed the most touching among all the touching and loving acts of Christ. It is the raising of Lazarus, recorded in the eleventh chapter of St John. In this narrative we may remark a method of proceeding quite different from that which had been pursued on the occasion of raising the daughter of Jairus.* Many of the Jews were about Martha and Mary to comfort them

* John xi. 19, 31.

concerning their brother. They attend the Saviour at the grave: far from repelling them, He appeals to His Father in their presence,* and renders thanks in order to be heard by them: the miracle is performed before their eyes, and many believed,† while some went to warn the Pharisees. But the time of the great offering was now hard at hand; and it is probable, if not plain, that at such a time the reasons for limiting the disclosures of the all-conquering power of Christ would cease to operate.

It appears, then, on the whole, as respects the Person of our Lord, that its ordinary exhibition to ordinary hearers and spectators, was that of a Man engaged in the best, and

* John xi. 41, 42. † John xi. 45, 46.

holiest, and tenderest ministries, among all the saddest of human miseries and trials; of One teaching in word, too, the best, and holiest, and tenderest lessons; and claiming, unequivocally and without appeal, a paramount authority for what He said and did; but, beyond this, asserting respecting Himself nothing, and leaving Himself to be freely judged by the character of His words and deeds.

It may be for the same reasons, or for reasons of which these form a part, that we find that very remarkable adjustment in the Gospels, and in the Gospel of St John as well as in the Synoptical writers, under which the kingdom of our Lord, while it is abundantly predicted, is nowhere explained; and the doctrine concerning it is kept even

in a deeper shade than the doctrine respecting the Person of Christ. John the Baptist had prophesied of the Christian Baptism as one differing from and much excelling his own: but our Lord did not renew the prophecy, and the baptism administered during His lifetime by His disciples appears to have been of the same character as that of the Forerunner. It seems that the minds of the Apostles themselves stood in need, on this subject, of peculiar preparation. For not even in discourse with them does our Lord explain the nature of His kingdom. Nay, the remarkable promise to St Peter, which followed upon and sealed his confession of the Messiahship, was imparted in figure, and was calculated rather to be retained and pondered

in the heart, than to convey immediate light to the mind: nor was it incompatible, as we see, with an energetic protest from the Apostle, following immediately, against the coming humiliation of his Master, or with the rebuke, bordering upon sternness, in which that Master apprised him that he then still savoured of, not the things which be of God, but the things which be of men. So late as in the great discourse of the Last Supper, Christ tells His disciples, "I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now;" and it is only in the very last stage of His adorable career, and when He has now put His scholars through the severest trial of their faith by His Death and Resurrection, that during those forty days before the Ascension, which

once were called the great forty days, He dwelt among them, and "spoke of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God."*

I would presume, in this place, to make an addition to what has been already said of the large use of parable by our Lord as a vehicle of instruction. Another leading feature in almost all the parables is the social and collective aspect of Christianity, incorporated in what the Gospels ordinarily call the Kingdom of Heaven. The parables are so contrived that, without explaining in detail the constitution of that kingdom, they familiarly impress the mind with its idea; with the image of some scheme or system into which men were to be brought, so that they should habitually

* Acts i. 8.

live in it, and that they should ultimately be judged by the laws appointed for its government. The kingdom as well as the kingship, the appointment of a new dispensation of brotherhood among men, as well as the supremacy of our Lord in that brotherhood, were thus, as it were, things sown and stored in the mind of the Apostles to abide their time; like the spark laid up in ashes to await the moment when it should be kindled into flame.

If the reader has patiently followed the argument to this point, it is now time to release him by proceeding to apply it to the case of "Ecce Homo." Supposing, then, that the author of that work has approached his subject on the human side, has dealt with our

Lord as with a man, has exhibited to us what purport to be a human form and lineaments, is he therefore at once to be condemned? Certainly not at once, if it be true, as it seems to be true, that in this respect he has only done what our Lord himself, by His ordinary and usual exhibition of Himself, both did, and encouraged the common hearer of His addresses, and beholder of His deeds, to do. The question whether this writer is to be discarded as an auxiliary in religious inquiry, or whether, on the contrary, we are his debtors for an eloquent, earnest, searching, and stirring "Survey of the Life and Work of Jesus Christ," cannot, then, be decided until we have considered whether his method, being one admissible in

principle, is also one suited to the needs of the times in which we live.

Before concluding with a few words addressed to the solution of that question, two observations require to be made. The first is that the defence and apology (in the polemical sense of the word,) which have here been offered, are of a general nature, and do not extend to the manner in which the task has been executed, but only to the principle on which the execution has been based. The language and the general tone must be judged on their own merits. On some points of expression I might not care to defend; on others I might even presume to differ. But to those who have dealt in broader censures I would at least suggest their inquiring of

themselves, whether all their zeal in the matter has been according to knowledge: and whether in some cases where we are inclined to jar with the author, the cause possibly may be that he has taken a wider and more adequate measure of the conditions of our Saviour's humanity than we have. I will venture upon a single, and at first sight it may be a rather startling instance. In his second chapter,* on the Temptation, the author says:—

"We are to conceive Him, therefore, as becoming now for the first time conscious of miraculous powers."

Such words may, at the first sight or hearing, send a chill through the blood of some.

* "Ecce Homo," p. 12.

It is so far *now* to travel back from the glory of His triumph and His reward, His everlasting Priesthood and government in heaven, to the dark and depressed career, and to the earliest and most depressed stages of the depressed career, on earth. But if He did not despise the Virgin's womb, if He lay in the cradle a wailing or a feeble infant, if He exhausted the years of childhood and of youth in submission to His Mother and to Joseph, if all that time He grew in wisdom as well as in stature, and was ever travelling the long stages of the road to a perfection by us inconceivable; if, even when the burden of His great ministry was upon Him, He has Himself told us that as His divine power was placed in abeyance, so likewise a

bound was mysteriously set upon His knowledge — what follows from all this? That there was accession to His mind and soul, from time to time, of what had not been there before: and that He was content to hold in measure, and to hold as a thing received, what, but for His humiliation in the flesh, was His without limit, and His as springing from within. And, if so, might it not well be, that in this crisis of the Temptation, when His normal use of miraculous power had not yet begun, the wicked suggestion to abuse it might give rise to a vivid consciousness in His mind, such as had not been there before? So considered, perhaps, this declaration is really within the limits marked out by the Sacred Text itself,

when it tells us that Christ was straitened in spirit at the view of the baptism that He was to be baptized with, until it were accomplished; and that His soul grew heavy and sorrowful, even unto death, as the dread image of the Passion came upon His nearer view. And thus the revulsion in our minds, upon the first perusal of such words, will have been a proof, not of their irreverent use, but of our too narrow acquaintance with the great truth of our Lord's humanity, and will itself have been a discipline for which we have to thank our author.

Is, then, his method—this alone remains to ask—suited or unsuited to the needs of our particular day and generation? To me it appears to be eminently suited to those needs;

and, with much deference to the judgment and authority of others, I will endeavour to explain the reason.

The mighty change which Christ achieved in the whole frame and attitude of the human mind with respect to Divine things, was transmitted from age to age, but not by effort and agony like His, or like the subordinate but kindred agency of those who were chosen by Him to co-operate in the great revolution. Sometimes it was, indeed, both sustained and developed by the great powers and by the faith and zeal of individuals, and by a constancy even unto death; but in the main it passed on from age to age by traditional, insensible, and unconscious influences. As the ages grew, and as the historic no less than the social weight

of Christianity rapidly accumulated, men, by no unnatural process, came to rely more and more on the evidence afforded by the simple prevalence of the religion in the world, which was in truth a very great one; less and less upon the results of any original investigation reaching upwards to the fountain-head. The adhesion of the civil power, the weight of a clergy, the solidity and mass of Christian institutions, the general accommodation of law to principles derived from the Scripture, that very flavour of at least an historic Christianity which, after a long undisputed possession, pervades and scents the whole atmosphere of social life,—all these in ordinary times seem to the mass of men to be, as proofs, so sufficient, that to seek for others would

be waste of time and labour. If there be unreason in this blind reliance, there is probably not less, but much more unreason shown, when the period of reaction comes, and when a credulity carried to excess is replaced in the fashion of the day by an incredulity that wanders and runs wild in the furthest outbreaks of extravagance: an incredulity, not only which argues from the narrowest premises to the broadest conclusions, but which, oftentimes dispensing with argument altogether, assumes that whatever in religion has heretofore been believed to be true is therefore likely to be false, and exhibits a ludicrous contrast between the overweening confidence of men in their own faculties, and their contempt for the faculties of those out of whose loins, with no intervening

change of species, they were born. I do not suggest that a description so broad could be justly applied to the present age. But it is in this direction that we have been lately tending; and we have at least travelled so far upon the road as this, that the evidences purely traditional have lost their command (among others) over those large classes of minds which, in other times, before a shock was given, or the tide of mere fashion turned, would perhaps most steadily and even blindly have received them. Their minds are like what I believe is said of a cargo of corn on board ship. It is stowed in bulk, and in fair weather the vessel trims well enough; but when there is a gale the mass of grain strains over to the leeward, and this dead weight increases the difficulty

and the danger, and does it this way or that mechanically, according to the point of the compass from which the wind may blow.

In such a time, there is a disposition either to deny outright the authority which Christianity may justly claim from its long historic existence, and from its having borne triumphantly the strain of so many tempests, or else, and perhaps with more danger, silently to slight them and pass them by, and to live a life deprived alike of the restraints and the consolations of a strong and solid belief. Under these circumstances, may it not be the duty of the scribe rightly instructed in the things concerning the kingdom of God, when the old weapons cease for the moment to penetrate, that he should resort to other weapons which

at the time are new, though in reality they are the oldest of all, and had only been laid aside because they were supposed to have done their work?

Such I understand to be the position assumed by the author of "Ecce Homo." He thrusts aside with a hand certainly not too reverent,—perhaps even somewhat brisk and rough,—all intermediate testimony of whatever kind. He invites his reader to consider for the moment all Christian tradition, all Christian institutions, all the long and diversified experience of the Faith in the world, as non-existent: to ascend with him the stream of time for more than eighteen hundred years; and to go direct into the presence of Christ, not such as He now presents Himself to us,

bearing in His hand the long roll of His conquests, but such as beside the sea of Galilee, or in the synagogue of Capernaum, or the Temple of Jerusalem, He then offered Himself to the ordinary Jew, with no other arms but those of His commission and His character, and the character of His acts and words. This is the journey that the attentive reader of "Ecce Homo" has to make under the author's guidance. He passes into the presence of Jesus of Nazareth, and there, without any foregone conclusion, either of submission or of dissent, gives that heed to the words and acts of the unfriended Teacher, which the honest Jew would give when those words were spoken, and those acts were done. And what is the result? I appeal for the

answer to the book. I appeal to a vitality, an earnestness, an eloquence, a power, all of them derived from the deep and overflowing life of the wondrous Figure which it contemplates and sets forth. Yes, even as to this hour

> "The world's unwithering countenance
> Is fresh as on creation's day,"

so the unwithering countenance of Christ beams upon us in the pages of this latest exposition of His character with the virgin freshness and the penetrating power that it might have presented to the view, when instead of being among the oldest, it was the latest birth of time. True of the Gospel, as it here appears to us, is that which was nobly said of one of its harbingers, at the

time when, as measured by years, old age was upon him, "Its eye is not dim, nor its natural force abated."*

Doubtless, when we ask about results from such a work, we come to a question which must be settled in the last resort by the individual mind for itself. By argument we may, I have thought, show, that to approach our Lord, and to paint the sacred portrait, on the human side, is no unlawful process; and likewise, that when the secondary and intermediate authorities are disregarded, it may be wise thus to seek at once for access to the presence of the Great King, and to sit among the listeners at His feet. But the question of questions remains: When we

* Deut. xxxiv. 7.

arrive in that presence, how does it make good its claims to supreme majesty and supreme command? To me it appears that each page of the book breathes out as it proceeds what we may call an air, which grows musical by degrees, and which, becoming more distinct even as it swells, takes form, so in due time we find, in the articulate conclusion, "Surely this is the Son of God: surely this is the King of Heaven." "And they shall call his name Emmanuel, which, being interpreted, is, God with us."*

So, then, through the fair gloss of His manhood, we perceive the rich bloom of His divinity; and from the author we accept his own moving precept: "Cling to Christ, cling

* Matt. i. 23.

ever closer unto Christ." And surely this we may say: if He is not now without an assailant, at least He is without a rival. If He be not the Sun of righteousness, the Physician of souls, the Friend that gives His life for His friends, and that sticketh closer than a brother, the unfailing Consoler, the constant Guide, the everlasting Priest and King, at least, as all must confess, there is no other come into His room. And we may reasonably hope to find that the present tendency to treat the old belief of man with a precipitate, shallow, and unexamining disparagement, is simply a distemper that infects for a time the moral atmosphere; that is due, like plagues and fevers, to our own previous folly and neglect; and that, when it has served its

work of admonition and reform, will be allowed to pass away. Towards this result the author of "Ecce Homo," if I read him right, will have the consolation and the praise of having furnished an earnest, powerful, and original contribution.

PART III.

IN the two former chapters I have presumed in some sense to speak for the author of "Ecce Homo." In this the third and last he will speak for himself, in passages which I shall select by no means with a view to exclude what may be open to criticism or objection, but in the hope of exhibiting a fair sample both of the matter and manner of the work, with something like a connected idea of its contents.

After a brief chapter on John the Baptist, which appears to be scarcely equal to the general standard of the work, our author comes to the Temptation, and here he glances at the subject of miracles:—

"Miracles are, in themselves, extremely improbable things, and cannot be admitted unless supported by a great concurrence of evidence. For some of the Evangelical miracles there is a concurrence of evidence which, when fairly considered, is very great indeed; for example, for the Resurrection, for the appearance of Christ to St Paul, for the general fact that Christ was a miraculous healer of disease. The evidence by which these facts are supported cannot be

tolerably accounted for by any hypothesis except that of their being true. And if they are once admitted, the antecedent improbability of many miracles less strongly attested is much diminished. Nevertheless nothing is more natural than that exaggerations and even inventions should be mixed in our biographies with genuine facts." (P. 10.)

The general view taken of the Temptation affords a pointed example of what may be termed our author's naturalistic method of handling:—

"Now the story of Christ's temptation is as unique as Christ's character. It is such a temptation as was never experienced by any one else, yet just such a temptation as Christ, and Christ in those peculiar circum-

stances, might be expected to experience. And further, this appropriateness of all the circumstances hardly seems to be perceived by the Evangelists themselves who narrate them. Their narrative is not like a poem, though it affords the materials for a poem; it is rather a dry chronicle.

"Let us consider the situation. We are to fix in our minds Christ's peculiar character, as it has been gathered from the Baptist's description of Him. His character then was such that He was compared to a lamb, a lamb of God. He was without ambition, and He had a peculiar, unrivalled, simplicity of devout confidence in God. Such is the Person to whom it is now announced by a great prophet that He has been called

to a most peculiar, a pre-eminent career. But this does not fully describe the situation; a most important circumstance has yet to be mentioned. From the time of His temptation Christ appeared as a worker of miracles. We are expressly told by St John that He had wrought none before, but all our authorities concur in representing Him as possessing and using the gift after this time. We are to conceive Him therefore as becoming now for the first time conscious of miraculous powers. Now none of our biographies point this out, and yet it is visibly the key to the whole narration. What is called Christ's temptation is the excitement of His mind which was caused by the nascent consciousness of supernatural power." (Pp. 11, 12.)

Another and perhaps less startling specimen of his method is supplied by the account of the Third Temptation, in which our Lord was solicited to fall down and worship Satan:—

"We are perhaps to understand that He was tempted to do something which on reflection appeared to Him equivalent to an act of homage to the evil spirit. What, then, could this be? It will explain much that follows in Christ's life, and render the whole story very complete and consistent, if we suppose that what He was tempted to do was to employ force in the establishment of His Messianic kingdom. On this hypothesis, the third temptation arises from the same source as the others; the mental struggle is still

caused by the question how to use the supernatural power. Nothing more natural than that it should occur to Christ that this power was expressly given to Him for the purpose of establishing, in defiance of all resistance, His everlasting kingdom. He must have heard from His instructors that the Messiah was to put all enemies under His feet, and to crush all opposition by irresistible God-given might. This certainly was the general expectation; this appeared legibly written in the prophetical books. And, in the sequel, it was because Christ refused to use His supernatural power in this way that His countrymen rejected Him. It was not that they expected a king, and that He appeared only as a teacher; on the contrary, He systematically

described Himself as a king. The stumbling-block was this, that, professing to be a king, He declined to use the weapons of force and compulsion that belong to kings. And as this caused so much surprise to His countrymen, it is natural that He should Himself have undergone a struggle before He determined thus to run counter to the traditional theory of the Messiah, and to all the prejudices of the nation. The tempter, we may suppose, approached Him with the whisper, 'Gird Thee with Thy sword upon Thy thigh; ride on, and Thy right hand shall teach Thee terrible things.'

"If this was the temptation, then again how characteristic of the Lamb of God was the resistance to it, and at the same time

how incomparably great the self-restraint involved in that resistance! One who believes himself born for universal monarchy, and capable by his rule of giving happiness to the world, is entrusted with powers which seem to afford the ready means of attaining that supremacy. By the overwhelming force of visible miracle it is possible for him to establish an absolute dominion, and to give to the race the laws which may make it happy. But He deliberately determines to adopt another course, to found His empire upon the consent, and not the fears, of mankind; to trust Himself, with His royal claims and His terrible purity and superiority, defenceless among mankind, and, however bitterly their envy may persecute Him, to

use His supernatural powers only in doing them good. This He actually did, and evidently in pursuance of a fixed plan; He persevered in this course, although politically, so to speak, it was fatal to His position, and though it bewildered His most attached followers; but by doing so He raised Himself to a throne on which He has been seated for nigh two thousand years, and gained an authority over men greater far than they have allowed to any legislator, greater than prophecy had ever attributed to the Messiah himself." (Pp. 15–17.)

Next we take the immeasurable divergence of His own idea of the coming kingdom from that current among His adversaries and critics:—

"It will soon become necessary to consider at leisure in what sense Christ understood His own royalty. At present it is enough to remark that, though He understood it in a very peculiar sense, and though He abdicated many of the functions of a sovereign, He yet regarded it as a royalty not less substantial, and far more dignified, than that of His ancestor David. We may go one step further before entering into the details, and note the exact ground of the quarrel which the Jews had with Him. He understood the work of the Messiah in one sense, and they in another, but what was the point of irreconcilable difference? They laid information against Him before the Roman government as a dangerous character; their real complaint against Him

was precisely this, that He was *not* dangerous. Pilate executed Him on the ground that His kingdom was of this world; the Jews procured His execution precisely because it was not. In other words, they could not forgive Him for claiming royalty and at the same time rejecting the use of physical force. His royal pretensions were not in themselves distasteful to them; backed by a military force, and favoured by success, those pretensions would have been enthusiastically received. His tranquil life, passed in teaching and healing the sick, could not in itself excite their hatred. An eloquent Teacher, gathering disciples round Him in Jerusalem, and offering a new and devout interpretation of the Mosaic law, might have aroused a little spite, but not the cry of

'Crucify Him!' They did not object to the king, they did not object to the philosopher; but they objected to the king in the garb of the philosopher. They were offended at what they thought the degradation of their great ideal. A king who neither had nor cared to have a court or an army; a king who could not enforce a command; a king who preached and lectured like a scribe, yet in His weakness and insignificance could not forget His dignity, had His royal title often in His mouth, and lectured with an authority that no scribe assumed; these violent contrasts, this disappointment of their theories, this homely parody of their hopes, inspired them with an irritation, and at last a malignant disgust, which it is not hard to understand." (Pp. 28, 29.)

The author is struck by three points especially in the design of Christ:—

"When we contemplate this scheme as a whole, and glance at the execution and results of it, three things strike us with astonishment. First, Its prodigious originality, if the expression may be used. What other man has had the courage or elevation of mind to say, 'I will build up a state by the mere force of my will, without help from the kings of the world, without taking advantage of any of the secondary causes which unite men together—unity of interest or speech, or blood-relationship. I will make laws for my state which shall never be repealed, and I will defy all the powers of destruction that are

at work in the world to destroy what I build!'

"Secondly, We are astonished at the calm confidence with which the scheme was carried out. The reason why statesmen can seldom work on this vast scale is, that it commonly requires a whole lifetime to gain that ascendancy over their fellow-men which such schemes presuppose. Some of the leading organisers of the world have said, 'I will work my way to supreme power, and then I will execute great plans.' But Christ overleaped the first stage altogether. He did not work His way to royalty, but simply said to all men, 'I am your King.' He did not struggle forward to a position in which He could found a new state, but simply founded it.

"Thirdly, We are astonished at the prodigious success of the scheme. It is not more certain that Christ presented Himself to men as the Founder, Legislator, and Judge of a divine society than it is certain that men have accepted Him in these characters; that the divine society has been founded; that it has lasted nearly two thousand years; that it has extended over a large and the most highly civilised portion of the earth's surface; and that it continues full of vigour at the present day." (Pp. 41, 42.)

This chapter, on "Christ's Credentials," is the noblest we have yet encountered. We must be content with giving the paragraph in which it is summed up:—

"To sum up the results of this chapter. We began by remarking that an astonishing plan met with an astonishing success, and we raised the question to what instrumentality that success was due. Christ announced Himself as the Founder and Legislator of a new society, and as the Supreme Judge of men. Now, by what means did He procure that these immense pretensions should be allowed? He might have done it by sheer power; He might have adopted persuasion, and pointed out the merits of the scheme and of the legislation He proposed to introduce. But He adopted a third plan, which had the effect, not merely of securing obedience, but of exciting enthusiasm and devotion. He laid men under an immense

obligation. He convinced them that He was a Person of altogether transcendent greatness; one who needed nothing at their hands; one whom it was impossible to benefit by conferring riches, or fame, or dominion upon Him, and that, being so great, He had devoted Himself of mere benevolence to their good. He showed them that for their sakes He lived a hard and laborious life, and exposed Himself to the utmost malice of powerful men. They saw Him hungry, though they believed Him able to turn the stones into bread; they saw His royal pretensions spurned, though they believed that He could in a moment take into His hand all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them; they saw His life in danger; they

saw Him at last expire in agonies, though they believed that, had He so willed it, no danger could harm Him, and that had He thrown Himself from the topmost pinnacle of the temple, He would have been softly received in the arms of ministering angels. Witnessing His sufferings, and convinced by the miracles they saw Him work that they were voluntarily endured, men's hearts were touched, and pity for weakness blending strangely with wondering admiration of unlimited power, an agitation of gratitude, sympathy, and astonishment, such as nothing else could ever excite, sprang up in them; and when, turning from His deeds to His words, they found this very self-denial which had guided His own life prescribed as the

principle which should guide theirs, gratitude broke forth in joyful obedience, self-denial produced self-denial, and the Law and Law-Giver together were enshrined in their inmost hearts for inseparable veneration." (Pp. 50, 51.)

Here is a beautiful conception of faith,—faith in its initial stage, but as including moral elements:—

"Justice is often but a form of pedantry, mercy mere easiness of temper, courage a mere firmness of physical constitution; but if these virtues are genuine, then they indicate not goodness merely, but goodness considerably developed. A man may be potentially just or merciful, yet from defect of

training he may be actually neither. We want a test which shall admit all who have it in them to be good whether their good qualities be trained or no. Such a test is found in faith. He who, when goodness is impressively put before him, exhibits an instinctive loyalty to it, starts forward to take its side, trusts himself to it, such a man has faith, and the root of the matter is in such a man. He may have habits of vice, but the loyal and faithful instinct in him will place him above many that practise virtue. He may be rude in thought and character, but he will unconsciously gravitate towards what is right. Other virtues can scarcely thrive without a fine natural organisation and a happy training. But the most neglected

and ungifted of men may make a beginning with faith. Other virtues want civilisation, a certain amount of knowledge, a few books; but in half-brutal countenances faith will light up a glimmer of nobleness. The savage, who can do little else, can wonder and worship and enthusiastically obey. He who cannot know what is right can know that some one else knows, he who has no law may still have a master, he who is incapable of justice may be capable of fidelity, he who understands little may have his sins forgiven because he loves much." (Pp. 66, 67.)

The following passages compare the pleas for toleration in cases of belief and of conduct:—

"We ought to be just as tolerant of an imperfect creed as we are of an imperfect practice. Everything which can be urged in excuse for the latter may also be pleaded for the former. If the way to Christian action is beset by corrupt habits and misleading passions, the path to Christian truth is overgrown with prejudices, and strewn with fallen theories and rotten systems which hide it from our view. It is quite as hard to think rightly as it is to act rightly, or even to feel rightly. And as all allow that an error is a less culpable thing than a crime or a vicious passion, it is monstrous that it should be more severely punished; it is monstrous that Christ, who was called the Friend of publicans and sinners, should be represented as the pitiless

enemy of bewildered seekers of truth. How could men have been guilty of such an inconsistency? By speaking of what they do not understand. Men, in general, do not understand or appreciate the difficulty of finding truth. All men must act, and therefore all men learn in some degree how difficult it is to act rightly. The consequence is that all men can make excuse for those who fail to act rightly. But all men are not compelled to make an independent search for truth, and those who voluntarily undertake to do so are always few. They ought, indeed, to find pity and charity when they fail, for their undertaking is full of hazard, and in the course of it they are too apt to leave friends and companions behind them, and when they succeed

they bring back glorious spoils for those who remained at home criticising them. But they cannot expect such charity, for the hazards and difficulties of the undertaking are known to themselves alone. To the world at large it seems quite easy to find truth and inexcusable to miss it. And no wonder! For by finding truth they mean only learning by rote the maxims current around them." (Pp. 72, 73.)

The author is greatly struck with the peremptory and universal character of the institution of baptism, which he perceives to be made "as indispensable to membership as that spiritual inspiration which is membership itself" in the new and "Divine

Society." The method of this society he considers to be broadly distinguished from that of the moral philosophy which has often laboured to improve mankind. The whole argument of the ninth chapter on this contrast will well reward perusal. The subjoined are two passages from it:—

"Philosophers had drawn their pupils from the *élite* of humanity; but Christ finds His material among the worst and meanest, for He does not propose merely to make the good better, but the bad good. And what is His machinery? He says the first step towards good dispositions is for a man to form a strong personal attachment. Let him first be drawn out of himself. Next

let the object of that attachment be a person of striking and conspicuous goodness. To worship such a person will be the best exercise in virtue that he can have. Let him vow obedience in life and death to such a person; let him mix and live with others who have made the same vow. He will have ever before his eyes an ideal of what he may himself become. His heart will be stirred by new feelings, a new world will be gradually revealed to him, and, more than this, a new self within his old self will make its presence felt, and a change will pass over him which he will feel it most appropriate to call a new birth. This is Christ's scheme stated in its most naked form; we shall have abundant opportuni-

ties in the sequel of expounding it more fully."

"Of these two influences—that of Reason and that of Living Example—which would a wise reformer reinforce? Christ chose the last. He gathered all men into a common relation to Himself, and demanded that each should set Him on a pedestal of his heart, giving a lower place to all other objects of worship, to father and mother, to husband or wife. In Him should the loyalty of all hearts centre, He should be their Pattern, their Authority, and Judge. Of Him and His service should no man be ashamed, but to those who acknowledged it morality should be an easy yoke, and the law of right as spontaneous as the law of life;

sufferings should be easy to bear, and the loss of worldly friends repaired by a new home in the bosom of the Christian kingdom; finally, in death itself their sleep should be sweet upon whose tombstone it could be written, 'Obdormivit in Christo.'" (Pp. 98, 101, 102.)

Having thus far traced, as he considers, the rise of the Monarchy of Christ, in his second part, which commences with the tenth chapter, the author professes to treat of the legislation by which that Monarchy is governed. The Christian philosophy of pleasure is strikingly handled in the following passage:—

"This paradoxical position—that pleasure

is necessary for us, and yet that it is not to be sought; that this world is to be renounced, and yet that it is noble and glorious—might, if it had been taken up by a philosopher, have been regarded as a subtlety which it would be impossible to act upon. But as the law laid down by a King and Master of mankind, every word of whom was treasured up and acted out with devotion, it has had a surprising influence upon human affairs. In the times of the Roman Emperors there appeared a sect which distinguished itself by the assiduous attention which it bestowed upon the bodily wants of mankind. This sect set the first example of a homely practical philanthropy, occupying itself with the relief of ordinary human sufferings, dispens-

ing food and clothing to the destitute and starving. At the same period there appeared a sect which was remarkable for the contempt in which it held human suffering. Roman magistrates were perplexed to find, when it became necessary to coerce this sect by penal inflictions, that bodily pains, tortures, and death itself were not regarded as evils by its members. These two sects appeared to run into contrary extremes. The one seemed to carry their regard for the body to the borders of effeminacy; the other pushed stoical apathy almost to madness. Yet these two sects were one and the same—the Christian Church. And though within that body every conceivable corruption has at some time or other sprung up, this tradition has never been

long lost, and in every age the Christian temper has shivered at the touch of Stoic apathy and shuddered at that of Epicurean indolence." (Pp. 118, 119.)

He shows how little had yet been accomplished towards establishing the true brotherhood of mankind, notwithstanding the marvellous achievement of the Romans in consolidating so many nations into a political unity; without which it is indeed difficult to see how the physical and social barriers to the spreading of Christianity could have been surmounted:—

"A number of nations which had before waged incessant war with one another had been forced into a sort of unity. What

court-poets call a golden age had set in. Round the whole shore of the Mediterranean Sea, and northward to the Danube and beyond the British Channel, national antipathies had been suppressed, and war had ceased, while the lives of men were regulated by an admirable code of laws. Yet, except to court-poets, this age did not seem golden to those who lived in it. On the contrary, they said it was something worse than an iron age; there was no metal from which they could name it. Never did men live under such a crushing sense of degradation, never did they look back with more bitter regret, never were the vices that spring out of despair so rife, never was sensuality cultivated more methodically, never did poetry curdle so readily

into satire, never was genius so much soured by cynicism, and never was calumny so abundant or so gross or so easily believed. If morality depended on laws, or happiness could be measured by comfort, this would have been the most glorious era in the past history of mankind. It was in fact one of the meanest and foulest, because a tone or spirit is necessary to morality, and self-respect is needful to happiness." (Pp. 132, 133.)

And now, what followed?

"The city of God, of which the Stoics doubtfully and feebly spoke, was now set up before the eyes of men. It was no insubstantial city, such as we fancy in the clouds, no invisible pattern, such as Plato thought

might be laid up in heaven, but a visible corporation, whose members met together to eat bread and drink wine, and into which they were initiated by bodily immersion in water. Here the Gentile met the Jew, whom he had been accustomed to regard as an enemy of the human race; the Roman met the lying Greek sophist, the Syrian slave, the gladiator born beside the Danube. In brotherhood they met, the natural birth and kindred of each forgotten, the baptism alone remembered in which they had been born again to God and to each other." (P. 136.)

In the closing pages of this chapter (xii.) the question of slavery is ably dealt with. Perhaps the whole history may be summed up

in this. The Gospel was its death-warrant; and execution was only delayed until the religion, then infant, was adult, and had strength enough to deal the blow.

In the thirteenth chapter the author approaches that doctrine of enthusiasm, or passionate devotion, which has been regarded as so peculiarly his own. Christianity did not, he says, leave us a code of morals, in the ordinary sense:—

"Instead of giving laws to His Society, He would give to every member of it a power of making laws for himself. He frequently repeated that to make the fruit of a tree good you must put the tree into a healthy state, and, slightly altering the illustration, that

fruit can only be expected from a fruit-tree, not from a thistle or thorn. The meaning of this plainly is, that a man's actions result from the state of his mind; that if that is healthy they will be right, and if not, they will be wrong. Such language was new in the mouth of a legislator, but not at all new in itself. It was an adoption of the style of philosophy. Philosophers had always made it their study to bring their minds into a healthy condition, '*frui emendato animo.*' When, however, we inquire what Christ considered a healthy condition of the mind to be, we do not find Him in agreement with philosophers. The law-making power of which mention has been made, which, raised to predominance, issues in an unerring tact or instinct of right action,

was differently conceived by Him and by them. They placed it in reason, and regarded passion as the antagonistic power which must be controlled and coerced by it. Christ also considers it necessary to control the passions, but He places them under the dominion, not of reason, but of a new and more powerful passion. The healthy mind of the philosophers is in a composed, tranquil, and impartial state; the healthy mind of Christ is in an elevated and enthusiastic state. Both are exempt from perturbation and unsteadiness, but the one by being immovably fixed, the other by being always powerfully attracted in one direction." (Pp. 144, 145. See also pp. 253, 254.)

This enthusiasm was justified by the char-

acter of the object proposed to the eyes and hearts of men:—

"Did the command to love go forth to those who had never seen a human being they could revere? Could His followers turn upon Him and say, How can we love a creature so degraded, full of vile wants and contemptible passions, whose little life is most harmlessly spent when it is an empty round of eating and sleeping,—a creature destined for the grave and for oblivion when his allotted term of fretfulness and folly has expired? Of this race Christ Himself was a member; and to this day is it not the best answer to all blasphemers of the species, the best consolation when our sense of its degra-

dation is keenest, that a human brain was behind His forehead, and a human heart beating in His breast, and that within the whole creation of God nothing more elevated or more attractive has yet been found than He? And if it be answered that there was in His nature something exceptional and peculiar,—that humanity must not be measured by the stature of Christ, let us remember that it was precisely thus that He wished it to be measured, delighting to call Himself the Son of Man, delighting to call the meanest of mankind His brothers. If some human beings are abject and contemptible,—if it be incredible to us that they can have any high dignity or destiny, do we regard them from so great a height as Christ?

Are we likely to be more pained by their faults and deficiencies than He was? Is our standard higher than His? And yet He associated by preference with these meanest of the race; no contempt for them did He ever express; no suspicion that they might be less dear than the best and wisest to the common Father; no doubt that they were naturally capable of rising to a moral elevation like His own. There is nothing of which a man may be prouder than of this; it is the most hopeful and redeeming fact in history; it is precisely what was wanting to raise the love of man as man to enthusiasm. An eternal glory has been shed upon the human race by the love Christ bore to it. And it was because the

Edict of Universal Love went forth to men whose hearts were in no cynical mood, but possessed with a spirit of devotion to a man, that words which at any other time, however grandly they might sound, would have been but words, penetrated so deeply; and along with the law of love the power of love was given. Therefore, also, the first Christians were enabled to dispense with philosophical phrases, and instead of saying that they loved the ideal of man in man, could simply say and feel that they loved Christ in every man.

"We have here the very kernel of the Christian moral scheme."

"Few of us sympathise originally and directly with this devotion; few of us can

perceive in human nature itself any merit sufficient to evoke it. But it is not so hard to love and venerate Him who felt it. So vast a passion of love, a devotion so comprehensive, elevated, deliberate, and profound, has not elsewhere been in any degree approached save by some of His imitators. And as love provokes love, many have found it possible to conceive for Christ an attachment, the closeness of which no words can describe, a veneration so possessing and absorbing the man within them, that they have said, 'I live no more, but Christ lives in me.' Now such a feeling carries with it of necessity the feeling of love for all human beings. It matters no longer what quality men may exhibit; amiable or unamiable, as

the brothers of Christ, as belonging to His sacred and consecrated kind, as the objects of His love in life and death, they must be dear to all to whom He is dear. And those who would for a moment know His heart and understand His life must begin by thinking of the whole race of man, and of each member of the race, with awful reverence and hope." (Pp. 164–167.)

The consequence has been a product altogether new in the world; that of holiness, exhibited in the human life and character:—

"But that Christ's method, when rightly applied, is really of mighty force may be shown by an argument which the severest censor of Christians will hardly refuse to

admit. Compare the ancient with the modern world; 'Look on this picture and on that.' One broad distinction in the characters of men forces itself into prominence. Among all the men of the ancient heathen world there were scarcely one or two to whom we might venture to apply the epithet 'holy.' In other words, there were not more than one or two, if any, who besides being virtuous in their actions were possessed with an unaffected enthusiasm of goodness, and besides abstaining from vice regarded even a vicious thought with horror. Probably no one will deny that in Christian countries this higher-toned goodness, which we call holiness, has existed. Few will maintain that it has been exceedingly rare. Perhaps the truth

is, that there has scarcely been a town in any Christian country since the time of Christ, where a century has passed without exhibiting a character of such elevation that his mere presence has shamed the bad and made the good better, and has been felt at times like the presence of God Himself. And if this be so, has Christ failed? or can Christianity die?"

"His biography may be summed up in the words, 'He went about doing good;' His wise words were secondary to His beneficial deeds; the latter were not introductory to the former, but the former grew occasionally, and, as it were, accidentally, out of the latter. The explanation of this is that Christ merely reduced to

practice His own principle. His morality required that the welfare and happiness of others should not merely be remembered as a restraint upon action, but should be made the principal motive of action, and what He preached in words He preached still more impressively and zealously in deeds. He set the first and greatest example of a life wholly governed and guided by the passion of humanity. The very scheme and plan of His life differed from that of other men. He had no personal prospects, no fortune to push, no ambitions. A good man before had been understood to be one who, in pursuit of his own personal happiness, is careful to consider also the happiness of those around him, declines all prosperity

gained at their expense, employs his leisure in relieving some of their wants, and who, lastly, in some extreme need or danger of those connected with him, his relations or his country, consents to sacrifice his own life or welfare to theirs. In this scheme of life, humanity in its rudimentary forms of family feeling or patriotism enters as a restraining or regulating principle; only in the extreme case does it become the mainspring of action. What with other good men was the extreme case, with Christ was the rule. In many countries and at many different times the lives of heroes had been offered up on the altar of filial, or parental, or patriotic love. A great impulse had overmastered them; personal interests, the

love of life and of the pleasures of life, had yielded to a higher motive; the names of those who had made the great oblation had been held in honour by succeeding ages, the place where it was made pointed out, the circumstances of it proudly recounted. Such a sacrifice, the crowning act of human goodness when it rises above itself, was made by Christ, not in some moment of elevation, not in some extreme emergency, but *habitually*. This is meant when it is said, He went about doing good; nor was the sacrifice made for relative, or friend, or country, but for all everywhere who bear the name of man." (Pp. 171, 187–189.)

The author's view of the law of philanthropy,

and of the adaptations which it acquires from the circumstances of modern society, is to be found in the seventeenth chapter, which will not bear being represented by extracts, and in chapters nineteen to twenty-three.

The subject of Authority, and its place in regulating the moral action of the world, has not been evaded. The broad and distinct general proposition with regard to its weight, which is contained in the following extract, will tempt many readers to wish for a fuller development:—

"Preaching is moral suasion delivered formally at stated intervals. In good education there is an equal amount of moral suasion, delivered far more impressively because de-

livered to individuals and at the moment when the need arises, while besides moral suasion other instruments are employed. Of these the principal is Authority, a most potent and indispensable agent. We have traced above the process by which mankind were ripened for the reception of Christianity. For many ages peremptory laws were imposed upon different nations, and enforced by a machinery of punishment. During these ages, out of the whole number of persons who obeyed these laws very few either knew or inquired why they had been imposed. But all the time these nations were forming habits of action, which gradually became so familiar to them that the nations who wanted similar habits became to them objects of con-

tempt and disgust as savages. At last the time came when the hidden principle of all law was revealed, and Christian humanity became the self-legislating life of mankind. Thus did the Law bring men to Christ. Now what the Law did for the race the schoolmaster does for the individual. He imposes rules, assigning a penalty for disobedience. Under this rule the pupil grows up, until order, punctuality, industry, justice and mercy to his school-fellows become the habits of his life. Then when the time comes, the strict rule relaxes, the pupil is taken into the master's confidence, his obedience becomes reasonable, a living morality." (Pp. 219, 220.)

The law of the Christian Sabbath is also

touched, too briefly for our desires, in p. 222; as is that commutation of "personal service in the cause of humanity" (p. 224) for money payments, often none of the most copious, to which the modern arrangement of working by societies, in many respects excellent, and apparently indispensable at the present day, yet cannot but afford an unhappy facility.

The depth of the mercy of Christ to women who have compromised their own peculiar glory, is exhibited in discussing two incidents which, says the author, may be seen as specimens of Christ's redeeming power. And here we come upon that great issue, which ought in truth to be used as a touchstone of all religions and of all states of society, their

effect upon the character and social position of Woman:—

"The female sex, in which antiquity saw nothing but inferiority, which Plato considered intended to do the same things as the male, only not so well, was understood for the first time by Christ. His treatment brought out its characteristics, its superiorities, its peculiar power of gratitude and self-devotion. That woman who dried with her hair the feet she had bathed in grateful tears has raised her whole sex to a higher level. But we are concerned with her not merely as a woman, but as a fallen woman. And it is when we consider her as such that the prodigious force and originality of Christ's mercy makes itself

felt. For it is probably in the case of this particular vice that justice ripens the slowest and the seldomest into mercy. Most persons in whom the moral sense is very strong are, as we have said, merciful; mercy is in general a measure of the higher degrees of keenness in the moral sense. But there is a limit beyond which it seems almost impossible for mercy, properly so called, to subsist. There are certain vices which seem to indicate a criminality so engrained, or at least so inveterate, that mercy is, as it were, choked in the deadly atmosphere that surrounds them, and dies for want of that hope upon which alone it can live. Vices that are incorrigible are not proper objects of mercy, and there are some vices which virtuous

people are found particularly ready to pronounce incorrigible. Few brave men have any pity to spare for a confirmed coward. And as cowardice seems to him who has the instinct of manliness a fatal vice in man, as implying an absence of the indispensable condition of masculine virtue, so does confirmed unchastity in women seem a fatal vice to those who reverence womanhood. And therefore little mercy for it is felt by those who take a serious view of sexual relations. There are multitudes who think lightly of it, and therefore feel a good deal of compassion for those who suffer at the hands of society such a terrible punishment for it. There are others who can have mercy on it while they contemplate it, as it were, at a distance, and do not

realise how mortal to the very soul of womanhood is the habitual desecration of all the sacraments of love. Lastly, there are some who force themselves to have mercy on it out of reverence for the example of Christ. But of those who see it near, and whose moral sense is keen enough to judge of it, the greater number pronounce it incurable. We know the pitiless cruelty with which virtuous women commonly regard it. Why is it that in this one case the female sex is more hard-hearted than the male? Probably because in this one case it feels more strongly, as might be expected, the heinousness of the offence; and those men who criticise women for their cruelty to their fallen sisters do not really judge from the advanced stage of

mercy, but from the lower stage of insensibility. It is commonly by love itself that men learn the sacredness of love. Yet, though Christ never entered the realm of sexual love, this sacredness seems to have been felt by Him far more deeply than by other men. We have already had an opportunity of observing this in the case of the woman taken in adultery. He exhibited on that occasion a profound delicacy of which there is no other example in the ancient world, and which anticipates and excels all that is noblest in chivalrous and finest in modern manners. In His treatment of the prostitute, then, how might we expect Him to act? Not, surely, with the ready tolerance of men, which is but laxity; we might expect

from Him rather the severity of women, which is purity. Disgust will overpower Him here, if anywhere. He will say, 'Thy sin's not accidental, but a trade. . . . 'Tis best that thou diest quickly.' There is no doubt that He was not wanting in severity; the gratitude that washed His feet in tears was not inspired by mere good-nature. But He found mercy too, where mercy commonly fails even in the tender hearts of women. And mercy triumphed, where it commonly dies of mere despair." (Pp. 247–249.)

Worthy of special notice is the treatment in pp. 267–8 of the Pharisees, as what may be called the "sepulchre-builders," with their successors in all times: but let us hasten on

to the concluding chapter. Once more he presents to us a glowing picture of the Christ of the Gospels:—

"Once more, how is this enthusiasm kindled? All virtues perpetuate themselves in a manner. When the pattern is once given it will be printed in a thousand copies. This enthusiasm, then, was shown to men in its most consummate form in Jesus Christ. From Him it flows as from a fountain. How it was kindled in Him who knows? 'The abysmal deeps of personality' hide this secret. . . . . But since Christ showed it to men, it has been found possible for them to imitate it, and every new imitation, by bringing the marvel visibly before us, revives the power of the

original. As a matter of fact the enthusiasm is kindled constantly in new hearts, and though in few it burns brightly, yet perhaps there are not very many in which it altogether goes out. At least the conception of morality which Christ gave has now become the universal one, and no man is thought good who does not in some measure satisfy it.

"Living examples are, as a general rule, more potent than those of which we read in books. And it is true that the sight of very humble degrees of Christian humanity in action will do more to kindle the enthusiasm, in most cases, than reading the most impressive scenes in the life of Christ. It cannot, therefore, be said that Christ is the direct source of all humanity. It is handed

on like the torch from runner to runner in the race of life. Still it not only exists in Christ in a pre-eminent degree, but the circumstances of His life and death gave pre-eminent opportunities of displaying it. The story of His life will always remain the one record in which the moral perfection of man stands revealed in its root and its unity, the hidden spring made palpably manifest by which the whole machine is moved. And as, in the will of God, this unique Man was elected to a unique sorrow, and holds as undisputed a sovereignty in suffering as in self-devotion, all lesser examples and lives will for ever hold a subordinate place, and serve chiefly to reflect light on the central and original Example. In His wounds all

human sorrows will hide themselves, and all human self-denials support themselves against His cross." (Pp. 321, 322.)

This passage appears to us, without asserting, to disclose—and thus to teach more winningly than if it drily asserted—that distinction *in kind* between the life and character of our Lord, and the lives and characters of other men, good and great in their measure, which forms at once the most natural and the most solid ground for the new conviction of His Deity in minds that have yet to learn the Christian alphabet, and which strengthens and refreshes that conviction, where it has been from the cradle upwards an original and primal truth. I have

omitted the few words which fill the blank: "It was the will of God to beget no second Son like Him;" for they seem to deal with things that we know not of, and are ill able to touch.

Presently the author gives us a solemn and much-needed warning:—

"The creed which makes human nature richer and larger, makes men at the same time capable of profounder sins; admitted into a holier sanctuary, they are exposed to the temptation of a greater sacrilege; awakened to the sense of new obligations, they sometimes lose their simple respect for the old ones; saints that have resisted the subtlest temptations sometimes begin again,

as it were, by yielding without a struggle to the coarsest; hypocrisy has become tenfold more ingenious and better supplied with disguises; in short, human nature has inevitably developed downwards as well as upwards; and if the Christian ages be compared with those of heathenism they are found worse as well as better, and it is possible to make it a question whether mankind has gained on the whole." (P. 326.)

Yet I venture to record dissent from the concluding words. No doubt wickedness is more wicked now, as well as goodness holier and higher, than it was in ante-Christian times. But surely the question, whether "mankind has gained on the whole?" is one

that we may regard as carried by the airs of heaven out of the ocean of argument into the haven, for us at least, of admitted truth. It is enough to appeal to social changes of a palpable character and of the broadest range. Take, for instance, the uplifted idea and state of woman; the second, and we may trust final, triumph, now all but accomplished, of the Gospel over slavery in its modern and most insidious form; the general retirement of social infamies into the shade; the acknowledgment of the obligation to provide systematically for the sick, the sorrowing, and the very poor; the creation and visible growth of some idea of right as between nations, however separated; the acknowledgment of peace, and not war, as the

natural and normal state of man; the endeavour, not always unsuccessful, to create by municipal law a legal and judicial equality on behalf of all members of the community, in despite of all the contrasts of fortune and even of character. These are some of the changes effected by Christianity in the very same regions, and among the same races, and now become part of the patrimony of civilisation, which appear to be in themselves decisive. And if they are in themselves decisive, the force of the decision is much enhanced, when it is borne in mind that all this ground has been made good at a time when, through the wider prevalence of a quickened intelligence, a far more extended scope and range than the old world ever

knew have been given to those temptations to selfishness and sin, (in every form except that of violence,) which beset on the right hand and on the left the path of every human pilgrim as he travels towards his home.

Finally, it is in no narrow spirit that the author exhibits to us the Church of Christ standing in the midst of the triumphs of which it has been the organ:—

"The triumph of the Christian Church is that it is *there*,—that the most daring of all speculative dreams, instead of being found impracticable, has been carried into effect, and, when carried into effect, instead of being confined to a few select spirits, has spread itself over a vast space of the earth's surface,

and, when thus diffused, instead of giving place after an age or two to something more adapted to a later time, has endured for two thousand years; and, at the end of two thousand years, instead of lingering as a mere wreck spared by the tolerance of the lovers of the past, still displays vigour and a capacity of adjusting itself to new conditions; and lastly, in all the transformations it undergoes, remains visibly the same thing, and inspired by its Founder's universal and unquenchable spirit."

"The achievement of Christ, in founding by His single will and power a structure so durable and so universal, is like no other achievement which history records. The masterpieces of the men of action are coarse and

common in comparison with it, and the masterpieces of speculation flimsy and unsubstantial. When we speak of it the commonplaces of admiration fail us altogether. Shall we speak of the originality of the design, of the skill displayed in the execution? All such terms are inadequate. Originality and contriving skill operated, indeed, but, as it were, implicitly. The creative effort which produced that against which, it is said, the gates of hell shall not prevail, cannot be analysed. No architects' designs were furnished for the New Jerusalem, no committee drew up rules for the Universal Commonwealth. If in the works of Nature we can trace the indications of calculation, of a struggle with difficulties, of precaution, of

ingenuity, then in Christ's work it may be that the same indications occur. But these inferior and secondary powers were not consciously exercised; they were implicitly present in the manifold yet single creative act. The inconceivable work was done in calmness; before the eyes of men it was noiselessly accomplished, attracting little attention. Who can describe that which unites men? Who has entered into the formation of speech, which is the symbol of their union? Who can describe exhaustively the origin of civil society? He who can do these things can explain the origin of the Christian Church. For others, it must be enough to say, 'The Holy Ghost fell on those that believed.' No man saw the building of the New Jerusalem,

the workmen crowded together, the unfinished walls and unpaved streets; no man heard the clink of trowel and pickaxe; it descended *out of heaven from God.*" (Pp. 327, 329, 330.)

With this noble specimen of the author's eloquence the volume closes. I have already spoken of the method it pursues with reference to its main object—the exhibition of the august, though simple, figure of our Lord in His Life and Work. Next to this in power is his conception of the institution to which the prosecution of that work from the day of Pentecost onward was committed, and by which the most ethereal and sublime speculation ever opened to the flight of the imagination was reduced to a body of fact

without rival in human experience. Nor should the reader pass unnoticed the broad and masculine grasp with which this work handles the subject of Christian morality, both personal and social. And it is doubtless needful that popular theology, which, like everything else, tends to settle down into mere formulas, should thus be shaken up from time to time, and measured and adjusted by its eternal standards: that we may come at least nearer to a sense how truly the treasure is divine which is lodged unworthily in us poor earthen vessels: how the dispensation provided for us in Christ our Lord, without in the least pretending to solve off-hand all the problems that surround and perplex our state, yet is thoroughly

adapted to all our capacities as well as all our practical and present needs: how lofty it is, and yet how lowly; how sublime, and yet how solid; with its head in the highest heavens, and with its feet upon the solid earth.

I must not close without wishing the author well in what remains unaccomplished of his work. What and how much that is the public is unaware; and in what manner he will acquit himself we can only augur from the powerful specimen of his handiwork which is already before us. It is to be hoped that the consciousness of his strength will not lead him to attempt too much. To trace historically and philosophically the construction of the Christian system in institu-

tions and in doctrines, would be the work, not (so to speak) of stolen leisure, but of a life; and would require not less of reverence than of courage, of caution than of comprehension. Let us, however, leave to the exercise of his freedom one whom we have already thanked for his use of it. To him, or to any of us, it will be a great calamity should he in such a matter be misled. But what has here been written, if it could be supposed to have a value, is not a retaining fee: it is simply a record of service done, and of gratitude gallantly and fairly earned.

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